



Christian Association  
Of Nigeria  
*and*  
**NATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

**BENJAMIN T. GUDAKU**

**Christian Association  
Of Nigeria  
And  
National  
Development**

Benjamin Tyavkase Gudaku

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## DEDICATION



This book is dedicated to my late friend, Mr. ***Maitalata Okandua Eya***, the great son of Afo land, with whom I nursed and shared the idea of this book. Unfortunately, the cold hands of death have snatched him untimely from us. ***Soreyi*** as you were fondly called; we miss you, Rest in Peace. (Amen).

## FOREWORD



Not so many decades have passed since the world became familiar with the parlance of *globalization*. Specifically, globalization is an economic concept that is associated with the integration of all economies into international economy through commerce. In an open manner however, globalization is used to describe the interaction between people of different regions which is spurred by combination of economic, technological, sociocultural, political, and biological factors. In other words, people have got reasons to inter-relate with the other from another block of the world. Closely related to globalization is the vogue concept of *pluralism*. According to Professor Diana Eck, the director of *Pluralism Project* at Harvard University, Boston, United States, diversity is not pluralism though they are used synonymously. Diversity is mere plurality and it emphasizes isolation, dissociation and aloofness.

Pluralism on the other hand is the necessary response to diversity which calls for engagement that

will bring about common society and promote common good while at the same time allowing interacting persons to keep their distinguishing characteristics. This is to say that diverse human communities must open up to pluralism as a value of our time with the aim of creating one global community that is strongly bonded by its search and struggle to attain common good which is the legitimacy of all moral actions. All religious, economic and political activities should collate into a humane engagement that pursues for the welfare of the people. Anything short of this is an aberration and should be strongly abhorred. Pope John Paul II perceived pluralism in what he described as the *culture of life* and his successor, Benedict XVI describes it as *love* in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*. The slogan with which Barrack Obama of the United State of America promotes pluralism is the panegyric of *universalbrotherhood*. In the world today, anyone or group of people not found in this band-wagon for united global brotherhood toward common welfare will be seen as a bizarre. As member of the global community with immense potentials to invest in the welfare project, Nigeria cannot afford to be found outside of this moving train. In Nigeria, religion should not be allowed to constitute an impediment, rather it should be paraphernalia that promotes the well-being of the citizens. This is the stake of all Nigerians and by implication therefore all existing groups, communities



and associations must garner their resources toward this direction.

Springing from this background, Benjamin Tyavkase Gudaku sets out to demonstrate that Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has got all, both the software and hardware that will significantly contribute to the development of Nigeria and thereby positively affect the world order. Many a people subscribe to the oppositional description of confrontation and fail or refuse to see its other aspect that implies meeting face to face with reality or calling a spade a spade. This other aspect of confrontation does not spoil the soup either; rather it serves the soup-topic in a big bowl before the glaring vision and feel of all at the discussion table, not minding if the ensuing response will be a disgust or gusto. What Gudaku has done in this book is to confront us with the parameters of Christendom in Nigeria under its umbrella existence of CAN and associated issues of functionality, intra-Christian relationship, inter-religious engagement and CAN's ancillary cooperation with the national government. He goes on to argue vehemently that all forms of relationship must steer towards national development. With the given of this book therefore, Gudaku is saying one stark option stares both Christian and non-Christian in the face, namely, peremptory pluralism of engagement with the other toward the common good of Nigerians. This is the ultimate value that can justify our religious and socio-

cultural identities anywhere in the world. Anything short of this is abhorrent! Regrettably, religious absolutes like, faith identity, demographic might, supersession, proselytization, divine figures etc. have constituted a conundrum in the process of dialogue, many times they lead to violent oppositions. The need for a workable panacea for this hitch no doubt calls for serious research.

In his humble contribution, Gudaku's work obliges Nigeria Muslims and Christians under the tutelage of Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) to move from constant examination of difficulties or religious absolutes found between them to a joint action that will unwind toward national development. As another trajectory of this panacea, Ecumenism may not have to replace Religious Studies but our institutions of learning will have to develop a curriculum that relates every study with national development. While serving as think-tank to the government on development CAN must also diversify its commitment towards material projects aimed at improving the lot of Nigerians. With these perspectives in mind, religion in Nigeria as it will be else in the world will posit itself as a useful instrument for development of people and land.

**Fr. Peter Genger**

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*2011*

# INTRODUCTION



My work in the media industry and penchant for keeping tabs on issues of development in Nigeria have made me court relationships across barriers of religion and ethnicity in an effort to sample candid opinions concerning the best blue-print that will facilitate the speedy socio-economic development of Nigeria. My friends, both from the Christian and Muslim folds have always availed me of their conviction on issues of national development and unity.

In our discussions with my Muslim brothers, we disagreed to agree that religion is an eminent barrier to national unity in Nigeria. Instances cited to drive home this point include the 1966 violence during which thousands of Christians were gruesomely massacred in the Muslim dominated north, and subsequent comparable events that eventually led to the civil war of 1967 to 1970.

As a matter of fact history is replete with Muslim – Christian clashes too numerous to mention, caused by

those whose stock in trade is manipulation of religion for other gains. It is, therefore, not surprising that religion has become a major determinant of so many issues that even political parties are formed based on it, moreso nothing generates suspicion in Nigeria as much as religion. This substantiates the claim that religion is an obstacle to national unity

My Christian friends on the other hand have never hesitated to remain adamant that denominational schism is the greatest threat to Christian unity and by extension national unity since both are not viewed as mutually exclusive. But I have asked and I am still asking, if Christian unity is guaranteed, will that automatically translate into national unity? We are aware, and history has records to show (as proof) that the Catholics and Protestants in Ireland fought, killed and maimed themselves with impunity. Aside doctrinal skirmishes that were at the center of the crises, the ambers of hatred between the two Christian denominations were fanned by a desire, not unconnected with the pursuit to control the levers of political power.

This, therefore, is indicative that a united Christendom, devoid of denominational *dagger-drawn* posture is likely to make the realization of national unity much easier, even though it is not a guarantee. The supposition therefore is that dissolving the barriers of religion will go a long way too in making national unity achievable as long as the other variables are addressed.

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) is one association that works to facilitate both oneness among the '*multiplying*' Christian denominations and harmony with Muslims. What CAN seeks to realize is undivided Christendom for one Nigeria and a united mankind. It needs be pointed out that inter-denominational parley on one hand and inter-religion harmony on the other will undoubtedly give credence to national unity, since there is no inherent contradiction in them.

This book undertakes to x-ray and glean the shades of history with a view to uncovering the socio-political development that necessitated the formation of CAN as well as its achievements in the over three decades of its existence. The world's popular phraseologies today are partnership, collaboration and globalization; all seeking to work together for the common good, not minding that "common good" has become an empty political cliché that means anything and nothing. The term has been grossly misused by lips-serving governments that no one takes the mention of it seriously again. That notwithstanding, this is what CAN wants to achieve within its fold and in the country.

Are you one of those asking what is the signature of CAN on the sands of national development? Are you also in doubt over the peace patrimony CAN is bequeathing to this generation and the generation yet unborn? Then the material in your hands provides the answer. Happy reading.



# CHAPTER

# 1

## *FORMATION OF CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (CAN)*



Justice can only be done to a subject matter of this kind if we excavate facts of history and diagnose them for necessary action. This will enable us understand *what* and *how* it was, in order to be thankful about the present and to plan for the future, as failing to do so will only be a sure way of hastening to meet waterloo. This, therefore, provides the justification for confronting you with historical antecedent that led to the formation of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) from the onset.

It needs be said that it might send perplexing stimuli even through a rational mind's spine to hear that the events that led to the formation of Christian Association of Nigeria were not too pleasing. As a matter of fact CAN could be said to have resulted from *reaction* rather than *action*. Reaction in the sense that it was a response to the prevailing socio-political development that impacted negatively on the wellbeing of the Christian faith. The formation of CAN was also to heal wounds of disunity among Christians in Nigeria, which



was a product of rivalry among missionaries. Bassey Magnus says that evidence abounds, including research literature to show that wherever the protestant and Catholic Missionaries met in Africa, opposition, antagonism and rivalry flared between them<sup>1</sup>. He goes on to posit that in Nigeria, missionary rivalry was even more intense<sup>2</sup>.

As if with an iron cast determination to make available collaborative evidence E.D. Morel put forward that there was lamentable intolerance displayed by Christian Proselytizers towards one another<sup>3</sup>. In a manner of adding salt to the injury, this disunity was promoted by the attitude of some missionaries who discredited the work of their rivals in the presence of their own African congregations. This understandably bred mistrust and intolerance between the African members of rival denominations. By every standard, this was regrettable and unfortunate, as the tension was not confined to the adult population.

The fact was that this disunity was being passed from missionaries to native believers; native believers in turn handed down the hatred to their children as if it

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1 Bassey Magnus, *Missionary Rivalry and Educational Expansion in Nigeria, 1885 – 1945*, <http://www.mellenpress.com/mellenpress.cfm?book:d=163&pc=9>, accessed on 19/08/2011.

2 Bassey Magnus, *Missionary Rivalry and Educational Expansion in Nigeria, 1885 – 1945*, <http://www.mellenpress.com/mellenpress.cfm?book:d=163&pc=9>, accessed on 19/08/2011.

3 Morel E.D., *Nigeria: Its people and its problems* (London: Smith Elder and Co., 1911) p. 216. Morel is considered as one of the first major writers on Nigeria.

were a priceless heritage and patrimony. This scenario makes me wonder if the missionaries and later on, Nigerian Christians went about habitually with theological revolvers in their ecclesiastical trousers, looking for an opponent to attack. Ray Stedman describes this era as that of splitting theological hairs with ecclesiastical razor blades<sup>4</sup>.

This regrettable saga of disunity poses the danger of the Christian church losing the monolithic power structure that causes men and women of the world to fear the church as a threat to their own power structures, as a renowned rival force in world politics and affairs. The second danger is that when the church is bedeviled by incurable disunity its powerful evangelistic thrust becomes ineffective. However, even at the zenith of this *bad for you* relationships, forerunners of better days to come were reasonably hopeful. For instance, a prominent African as quoted by Jordan S. Rengshwat made this prophecy in the 1960s 'when you missionaries leave, our churches will unite into one body'.<sup>5</sup>

Aside Christian disunity, another phenomenon that the formation of CAN was *acting in response* to was the post-independence tricks of government. The first of such actions was the taking over of mission schools and

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4 Ray Stedman, The Prayer for Unity, <http://www.jesuschristsaviour/net.christianity>, accessed on 15/07/2011.

5 Jordan S. Rengshwat, Christian Association of Nigeria: Politics and Ecumenism, <http://www.tcn.org/indexfiles/rb50.rengshwat>, accessed on 23/08/2011.

hospitals. In addition, to the hijack of schools and hospitals, government openly demonstrated soft spot for Islam over and above other religions by allowing for the inclusion of the *Sharia* provision in the 1979 constitution which generated concerns and unease as it was perceived as *islamization* of the country. On this same issue, Saleh Dauda holds “the most controversial of all the constitutional provisions was the *Sharia*. The subcommittee on the judiciary had recommended a Federal *Sharia* Court of Appeal to hear and determine appeals from *Sharia* Courts of Appeal in the states. The CDC (Constitutional Drafting Committee) had accepted this. But as soon as the draft was thrown upon to the public for debate the issue attracted the widest and most emotional reactions, opponents saw it as an imposition of Islam on a country that is a secular state. Proponents boycotted sittings for nearly three weeks from 6<sup>th</sup> April 1978. It took the personal intervention of the Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo before the group rejoined the proceedings on 24<sup>th</sup> April<sup>6</sup>. Lamenting the issue, Pantaleon Osondu says “most of all, the *islamization* of the entire nation, an incipient policy of the National Federal rulership dominated by Muslims, is a great danger and obstacle to the full flourishing and eventual maturity of the Christian

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6 Saleh Dauda, *Constitutional Development in Nigeria*, (Ibadan: Daily Graphics Nigeria Ltd, 2008) p. 63

Church in Nigeria”<sup>7</sup>.

Furthermore the discrepancy in state-faith relations such as state sponsorship of pilgrimages to Mecca was another bitter pill that Christians could not swallow. In concurrence Matthew Hassan Kukah says “Federal government subsidizes mosques in public places, subsidizes pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina, pays Sharia judges and grand Khadis from public funds while the same benefits are not enjoyed by the Christians or the African Traditional Religionists”<sup>8</sup>. The pilgrimage diatribe was eventually put to rest with the inclusion of Christians to also benefit from state sponsorship of pilgrimage.

One more worrisome development that needs to be pointed out was the legacy of the Muslim-dominated military dictatorship. As a matter of fact, from Generals Murtala Mohammed to Mohammadu Buhari to Ibrahim Badamasi Babaginda and to the late Sani Abacha: these cast themselves as devout Muslims and legitimized their juntas by cultivating Islamic solidarity. They disagreed only when it came to personal matters and self-aggrandizement but metamorphosed into undivided bond in a manner of a broom, as long as the issue at stake is Islam.

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7 Pantaleon O. Ireogbu, *Appropriate Ecclesiology Through Narrative Theology to An African church*. (Owerri: International University Press, 1996) p. 82

8 cfr. Bauna P. Tanko, *The Christian Association of Nigeria and the challenges of the Ecumenical Imperative*, (Rome: N. Domenici Pecheux, 1991) p. 94.

You need not to blame them for exhibiting this attitude towards the Christian faith. For as Margery Perham observed, "human societies somewhat resemble trees in their tendency to grow according to the shape to which they were pruned in youth"<sup>9</sup>. The colonial masters who were themselves so-called Christians did not behave any better. The post-independence Nigerian government only continued with the legacy of the colonial masters, by sustaining the 'second' class status of Christianity. For instance, the Muslim rulers and the colonial masters gave conditions under which the missionaries could operate in Northern Nigeria.

The first condition placed limits on where they could preach, namely neither in areas where Muslim were in the majority nor near mosques and markets, nor other public places. Secondly, house to house visiting of Muslims could only be done with prior consent of the inhabitants of the compound to be visited. Thirdly, they could only give literatures to Muslims if the Muslims took the initiative by requesting for it. Fourthly, they were to conduct themselves in such a way as not to offend the religious beliefs of any section of the community. And fifthly, they were to refrain from, and discourage any action which might be detrimental to the

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9 Margrey Perham, *Lugard, The Years of Authority 1889 – 1845* (London: Collins, 1960) p. 486

approved system of administration<sup>10</sup>.

But if preaching could not be done near public places, where was it to be done, in the bush for animals? Was this condition applicable to Islam also? In addition what constituted *an offence to religious belief of the community; refraining from and discouraging any action detrimental to the approved administration* was not defined at all. The implication is that anyone could wake up and under this guise stop you from doing what his whims and caprices tell him is wrong. This restriction was not placed on missionaries alone but extended to Nigerian Christians: "Christian citizens of Nigeria were not allowed to dwell in Muslim areas, and this was what led to the establishment of places such as Sabon-Gari in Kano"<sup>11</sup>. In all these, who knows, probably the lack of Christian monolithic power as earlier hinted was interpreted as walk over-match for Islam on the pitch of political power in Nigeria.

This was the worrying historical antecedent that necessitated the birth of CAN, which to my mind is an organ of social ecumenism. Expressing his feelings on the need for unity, the Catholic Archbishop of Ibadan, most Reverend Doctor Job Alaba says "the takeover of schools and other institutions of the voluntary agencies

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10 Agreement on the conditions under which missionaries may operate in Northern Region of Nigeria, field secretary's report, headquarters memo no. 5, 1955, pp. 1-8.

11 cfr. Samuel Dali, 'Mission Activities' in *Churches in Fellowship – the story of TEKAN*, Mark Hopkins and Musa Gaiya (eds.), Bukuru: ACTS, 2005) p. 32

by the federal government had already created an atmosphere of social ecumenism among us<sup>12</sup>.

## FORMATION OF CAN

Jordan Samson Rengshwat of Theological College of Northern Nigeria, (TCNN) Bukuru – Jos gives February 1976 as the birthday of CAN<sup>13</sup>. However, the official website of CAN has it that CAN was formed on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, 1976<sup>14</sup>. The event that midwived CAN, was that the (then) military government, under General Olusegun Obasanjo invited several church leaders of diverse denominations including Muslim religious leaders to Dodan Barracks, Lagos.

Government's sole purpose was to hold a discussion with the church leaders on the National pledge and the salutation of the National flag which the government intended to introduce into the nation's primary and secondary schools. The church leaders did not object to the introduction of the two items provided, on the condition that the events would be preceded by the usual morning devotion, during which staff and students/pupils of each school will worship their creator and offer praises and prayers to him.

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12 cfr. Bauna P. Tanko, *The Christian Association of Nigeria and the Challenge of the Ecumenical Imperative*, (Rome: N. Domenici Pecheux, 1991), p. 143.

13 Jordan S. Rengshwat, *Christian Association of Nigeria: Politics and Ecumenism*, <http://www.tcnn.org/index-files/rb50.rengshwat>, accessed on 23/08/2011

14 <http://www.canonline.org.com>, accessed on 15/08/2011.



During the meeting, something vexing took place as narrated by Musa A.B Gaiya. "At the meeting, Yar'adua had asked Muslims to both open and close the meeting with prayers. One of the Christian leaders stood up (and) asked, 'can't you ask a Christian to say a prayer?' Yar'adua replied, as reported by Jolly Tanko Yusuf, 'there are so many denominations represented here, how can I ask any Christian to say a prayer?'<sup>15</sup> This contretemps was out-and-out timely and appropriate homily for the Christian leaders, as it was not music to their ears. Thus, immediately after the meeting, the church leaders spontaneously decided to go to a place not too far from Dodan Barracks where they could hold a meeting. The Catholic Secretariat, opposite the Race Course Bus Stop was unanimously chosen<sup>16</sup>. Bauna Tanko Peter explains that it was during this meeting that it was decided that there has to be one central body for all Christians in Nigeria to safeguard their interest in dealing with government... At the end, cardinal Dominic Ekandem was elected as President of CAN, while Mr. C.O. Williams, the secretary of Christian Council of Nigeria, (CCN) was elected secretary of CAN<sup>17</sup>. One could therefore say that one of the main aims and objectives

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15 Musa A.B. Gaiya, 'Further Reflections on Christianity in Northern Nigeria, 1975 – 2000' in *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*, E.P.T Crampton (ed.), Revised edition (Bukuru: ACTS, 2004) p. 260.

16 <http://www.canonline.org.com>, accessed on 15/08/2011

17 Bauna P. Tanko, *The Christian Association of Nigeria and the challenge of Ecumenical Imperative*, (Rome: N. Domenici Pecheux, 1991) pp. 126-127.

of CAN is to take joint actions on vital matters, especially on issues which affect the Christian faith and the welfare of the generality of Nigerians. This was to be achieved under the agreed name: Christian Association of Nigeria, which was registered under the perpetual Act Cap 98 (now CAC).<sup>18</sup>

CAN is an association of Christian churches, with distinct identities, recognizable church structures and system of worship of one God in the trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The association makes Christ the centre of all its works and promotes the glory of God, by encouraging the growth and unity of churches and helping them to lead the nation and her people to partake of Christ's salvation and all its fruits.

For a church to qualify and to enjoy the membership of CAN, such a church must be registered under companies and Allied Matters Act of 1990 or previous legislation. Another necessary condition is to belong to one of the five church groups: Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN) ii. Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) iii. Christian Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (CPFN), Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, (PFN) iv. Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) and v. TEKAN and ECWA Fellowship<sup>19</sup>

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18 <http://www.canonline.org.com>, accessed on 15/08/2011.

19 Constitution of the Christian Association of Nigeria, amended version, 2004, p. 2

Article 7 of CAN constitution states that each member church shall be autonomous in its internal affairs, but may receive advice from the Association in case of dissention and sharp disagreement within its fold. Notwithstanding the autonomy, each member church should be ready to cooperate with other member churches in order to ensure smooth running of the association.

It needs to be said that CAN does not believe that it has a mandate of weaving all the churches in the country into one single church. Rather CAN believes that the variety of ways in which our Creator manifest Himself ought to be a guard to the Kaleidoscopic variety of methods by which God's creatures should worship Him and offer prayers to Him. The autonomy, understanding of member churches and the camaraderie for that matter, made CAN to be the largest Ecumenical body ever established in Nigeria and indeed Africa.



## CHAPTER

# 2

### *MEMBER CHURCHES OF CAN*



#### **CATHOLIC SECRETARIAT OF NIGERIA (CSN)**

The Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria is an administrative headquarters of the Catholic Bishop Conference of Nigeria. It therefore means that one can only understand the Catholic Secretariat if it is viewed from the prism of the history of the Catholic Church in Nigeria.

In this wise, the comment by C.A Imokhai is not only informative but also educative. In his appraisal of the Catholic Church in Nigeria, he states that several attempts were made by a number of religious orders and missionary societies to establish the Catholic faith in Nigeria since the 15<sup>th</sup> century with varying degrees of success<sup>20</sup>. He explains further that the Portuguese priests of the Diocese of Lisbon made the first attempt during the age of exploration. The King of Portugal was

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20 cfr. Donatus P. Ukong, The presence and impact of Pentecostalism in Nigeria, <http://www.glopent.net/members/frdona/presence-and-impact-of-pentecostalism-in-Nigeria-pdf>, accessed on 26/08/2011.

interested in the conversion of West Africa which was assigned to him through the Papal Bull of demarcation<sup>21</sup>.

In carrying out their mission, the king of Portugal and the missionaries adopted the early missionary strategy used in the conversion of Europe to Christianity. By this approach, efforts were directed to the ruler of the state in the hope that with his influence, over the lives of his subjects, his conversion would automatically mean the conversion of the entire state to Christianity<sup>22</sup>.

The cradle of Catholicism in Nigeria is the kingdom of Warri in the 1570s<sup>23</sup>, through the activities of the Portuguese missionaries. However, Pantaleon Osundo Iroegbu has it that the Portuguese missionaries arrived Benin and Warri in 1487<sup>24</sup>, 83 years earlier than the 1570 date.

An interesting testimony recorded in 1644 in Warri is worth sharing.

In the city of Warri, there is a church with an altar, a crucifix, statues of Mary and the

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21 Donatus P. Ukong, The presence and impact of Pentecostalism in Nigeria, <http://www.glopent.net/members/frdona/presence-and-impact-of-pentecostalism-in-Nigeria.pdf>, accessed on 26/08/2011.

22 Makozi A.O and Afolabi G.J., (eds.), *The History of The Catholic Church in Nigeria*, (Lagos: Macmillian Nigeria Publishers Ltd, 1982) p. 6

23 Ishichei E., *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to Present*, (London: spck, 1995) p. 45

24 Pantaleon O. Iroegbu, *Appropriate Ecclesiology Through Narrative Theology to an African Church*, (Owerri: International University Press, 1996) p. 79.

apostles, and two candle stocks alongside. The black people came into the church with the rosary constantly in their hands, just as proper Portuguese do. They recite it together with other Polish prayers. Outwardly; they show themselves very religious. They also know how to read and write and are eager for Portuguese books, pens, ink and paper<sup>25</sup>.

It was not only in Warri that the Catholic Faith was planted in Nigeria. By 1868, Reverend Father Bouche became the first resident priest in Lagos unlike earlier ones that came from Benin Republic. 50 years after, Catholicism went beyond Lagos to Abeokuta, Ijebu and other surrounding neighbourhoods, with Lagos being raised to the status of a prefecture.

Onitsha was chosen as a central and expansion point for the eastern Nigeria mission because it had a large population and other favourable geo-pastoral advantages<sup>26</sup>. One of the pioneer priests in the region, Reverend Father Joseph Lutz sheds more light-on the comparative advantage of Onitsha. He says the place has a large population that is not influenced by Islam.

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25 A brief History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria, <http://www.cbnc.org/aspscript>, accessed on 29/07/2011.

26 Pantaleon O. Iroegbu, *Appropriate Ecclesiology Through Narrative Theology to an African Church*, (Owerri: International University Press Ltd, 1996) p. 80.



Communication with Europe is easily available. The climate here seem better than at Igbebe (Lokoja). There is safety, for the king is sympathetic to the cause. There is easy access to food stuff, for there is a big market by the river bank which sits every day<sup>27</sup>. In the Calabar area too, the success story of missionary work climaxed with the gift of the first Nigerian cardinal, Dominic Ekandem in 1976.

In northern Nigeria, the Catholic faith arrived Shendam in Plateau state in 1907 via society for African missions, (SMA). But before then, they had established a mission in Lokoja in 1884. At this time the new missions were under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Asaba. In all honesty the establishment of Christianity in Nigeria had caused the missionaries great pain including loss of lives. The knowledge of their pain and difficulties comes from an instruction to the missionaries that says "this new venture should be conducted as economically as possible and except the flour and wine for the mass, the missionaries should renounce all food supplies from Europe and live entirely on the resources they would find in the country"<sup>28</sup>. Thus, the missionaries were forced to live on food they were meeting for the first time.

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27 Joseph Lutz, "Annales Apostoliques 1886" in Obi C.A (ed.) *A Hundred Years of Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria, 1885 – 1985*. (Onitsha: Africana – FEP Publishers, 1985) p. 13.

28 Raymond Hickey as quoted by Zacharia Guyit in a paper, "The Growth of the Catholic Church in Northern Nigeria", presented to students of college of education, Gindiri, Plateau State, p. 3.

Fathers Oswald Waller, Ernest Belin and Joseph Mouren of the Society of African Missions, were the first missionaries, that established a mission station North of the Rivers Niger and Benue. They left Marseilles (France) on October 12<sup>th</sup> 1906 and arrived off the coast at Lagos on 26<sup>th</sup> November. From Lagos they went in a smaller boat to the mouth of the Niger at Buruntu for their onward journey up the river to Asaba which was the headquarters of Carlo Zappa SMA, Prefect Apostolic of the Upper Niger. He was responsible for the area north of the Rivers Niger and Benue. They arrived at Asaba on 9<sup>th</sup> December to discover that Zappa was on tour, visiting his stations and would not be back until December 21<sup>st</sup> so they had to restrain their impatience to reach their new mission – wherever it might be – until Zappa returned.

The waiting must have seemed endless to them but they used their stay wisely to gain whatever information was available on the methods of evangelization used in the prefecture, established relations with the colonial authorities and anything else that would be of use to them in setting up their own mission.

As soon as Zappa had received the news from France of their appointment he wrote to a number of British administrators in the Northern territory but only one replied, Captain Ruxton, resident of Muri division. So they spent Christmas at Asaba with Zappa and on

December 26<sup>th</sup> the three priests left for Lokoja to see Ruxton who lived about 500 kilometers away. They arrived at Lokoja on 28<sup>th</sup> December. They spent the New Year with Frs. Scherrer and Burr and were ready to set off for Ibi on January 2<sup>nd</sup>. They ran into difficulty after difficulty in trying to take off from Lokoja. First, there was a leak in the canoe carrying their belongings and this took a day to repair. Then the canoe men refused to leave because it was too late. The next blow came during the night when they woke them up with cries that the canoes had disappeared.

After some anxious hours they heard that the canoes had been found and were back at the river bank. Finally to their great grief, they left Lokoja and entered the Benue on January 4<sup>th</sup>. Since this was the first Friday of the month they consecrated their new mission to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and when they built their Church in Shendam they named it the Church of the Sacred Heart, the name it bears to the present day.

Unfortunately for them, Ruxton was not at Ibi so they had to travel farther up the river to Amar to meet him. Ruxton was an Anglican married to a French Catholic lady, Genevieve, whose brother was a Holy Ghost priest. The Ruxtons gave them a great welcome. That first encounter led to a deep friendship over the years ahead. This encounter was also of great solace to these missionaries who were so far away from their brother SMAs in their isolated mission. It was also

meant to be the test of their faith and physical endurance.

Some protestant missionary groups had already established themselves in different parts of Muri province so the SMAs were somewhat restricted in their choice of the location of their new mission. Government policy at the time emphasized “zoning” when a particular denomination was settled in an area others were discouraged from working there. On the Resident's advice they decided to go to the Goemai people of Shendam and he gave them a letter of recommendation for the Chief, the Long Goemai. Ruxton told them that although Shendam was a small town a new road was projected from Ibi through Shendam to Jos to cater for the tin-mining industry of the Plateau and so the area would develop in the future. It was a great relief to the SMAs after all their travels and difficulties to know that the vague picture of a new mission given to them in France by Mgr. Pellet had now taken a definite shape with the acceptance of Shendam as their destination.

So they returned to Ibi on the south bank of the Benue opposite the mouth of the Shimankar river leading to Shendam and they prepared for the last leg of their long journey. But Belin stayed at Ibi to take care of their belongings and so did not reach Shendam for some days.

Waller and Mouren were welcomed warmly by the

Long Goemai (Chief of Shendam) and his people, who vacated some of their huts for them. They celebrated the first mass in Shendam on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> February and kept this memo. "We have invited the Chief and the people and here they are, respectful and interested in the strange ceremony"<sup>29</sup>. They had days, weeks and months of hard, frustrating work: clearing the ground for the farm, building the house, caring for the herd of sheep they had acquired. 100 sheep had been purchased at 2 shillings each from Captain Ruxton who had come on tour to collect taxes and, since none of the local men was willing to work as a shepherd, the task fell to Mouren. Waller was the farmer and Belin the carpenter who made their basic furniture. They faced the harsh reality of the pioneer. Mouren described it thus:

"A life of hard physical work, of insufficient and unbalanced food, of privations of all sorts, and our health broke down."<sup>30</sup> This humble beginning of the Catholic faith that looked as small and as insignificant in size as the mustard seed has grown into a huge tree with 52 Dioceses, including eight archdioceses, thousands of priests and millions of Catholic faithful.

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29 Raymond Hickey as quoted by Zacharia Guyit in a paper, "The Growth of the Catholic Church in Northern Nigeria", presented to students of college of education, Gindiri, Plateau State, p. 5.

30. Raymond Hickey as quoted by Zacharia Guyit in a paper, "The Growth of the Catholic Church in Northern Nigeria", presented to students of college of education, Gindiri, Plateau State, p. 5.

### **CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF NIGERIA (CCN)**

The Christian Council of Nigeria, another prominent member of CAN was formed in 1929<sup>31</sup>. The Council has area communities in more or less the 36 states of the federation. The fundamental duty of the Council is “to facilitate or establish a Christian church in Nigeria that worships God in the trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and accepts the scriptures of the old and new testaments”<sup>32</sup>. In addition, the Council has the mission statement of making possible the building of the capacity of member churches in a way that ensures a sustained Christian way of life, witness and transformation of the Nigerian society.

The Council which had 14 member churches considered itself as an associate body with World Council of Churches until it discovered two years ago that it had to submit an application in order to profit the prestigious status of associate council<sup>33</sup>. The member churches include but are not restricted to the following. Methodist Church, Anglican Church, Baptist Church

### **PENTECOSTAL FELLOWSHIP OF NIGERIA (PFN)**

The formation of Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria was mooted at a forum organized by Dr. Umah Ukpai, at the Greater Lagos for Christ Crusade. On the tenth of

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31 <http://www.anglican-nig/main/ph.p?l-j12x4/h>, accessed on 24/08/2011

32 <http://www.anglican-nig/main/ph.p?l-j12x4/h>, accessed on 24/08/2011

33 <http://www.anglican-nig/main/ph.p?l-j12x4/h>, accessed on 24/08/2011

February 1985<sup>34</sup> the fellowship was formed. According to O.B.E Josiah Amata, the founding fathers of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria had in mind a common objective which was to bring together under one umbrella of the Holy Spirit filled Christian churches and organizations that believe and are into the practice of the full gospel message of the Acts of Apostle chapter two, in an independent and autonomous Christian fellowship<sup>35</sup> Peter Ewenla says that from obscurity in 1985, the PFN has today grown to become a force to reckon with. It has taken its rightful place in virtually every sphere of our national life: spiritually, politically, socially, and economically<sup>36</sup>. Pentecostal fellowship in Nigeria has these basic features.

### 1. **Holy Bible**

Pentecostalism has a general desire and love for the Bible as the written word of God, and as a permanent text of *bona fide* Christian moral life. Pentecostalism does not see the Bible as a book meant for the clergy.

### 2. **Music**

Religious music in Nigeria has witnessed a

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34 Peter Ewenla, "we have come of age" in *PFN news*, February 1, 2005, p. 2

35 Josiah Amata, *The Nigerian Pentecostal Movement: the people, the purpose and the power*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (N.P) p. 88

36 Peter Ewenla, "we have come of age" in *PFN news*, February 1, 2005, p. 2

remarkable innovation since the outburst of Pentecostalism. Many people had discovered a new dimension of being a Christian through gospel music. The changeability of Pentecostal rhyme and rhythm has made it easy for people to sing and play the same tune in various languages and in diverse cultural ambiances. Pentecostal music in many respects homogenizes the cultural spectrum of the country. The youths of various ethnic background and religious affiliations can now come together to sing and enjoy a common religious tune.

According to Columbanus Udofia, “music is a central part of African culture, especially in African religious culture”<sup>37</sup>. Pentecostalism has really fostered the flourishing of African rhythm in Christian worship, making the Church more at home in the African soul. The company of Pentecostal music and accompaniments has helped many young Africans to realize that religious services can be “pleasurable” and has created a common identity for people of various denominations and ethnic groups into the one big family of God. Moreover, Pentecostal music has reawakened the religious life of the people. This

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37 Columbus A. Udofia, *The uses of Gratification of Contemporary Christian Music in the lives and Religionity of Nigerian Youth Living in Lagos*, (N.P) 2004, p. 38.



explains why capital is allotted for the provision of a state of art musical instruments as singing and dancing are becoming essential part of the liturgy. Pentecostalism has led to the integration of African music into Christian worship in a very significant manner and style.

3. **Spirituality and prayer life**

There is no doubt that Pentecostalism has awakened in Nigerians an excitement for spiritual life in the secular world, and a yearning for an experiential communion with God in prayers. People are now giving serious attention to their prayer life. There is a noticeable quest for a spirituality based on a personal relationship with the Lord.

Pentecostalism is noted for encouraging a spirituality that abhors confinement and standardization, while provoking an intimate experience of the Holy Spirit is a celebrated development. Many Nigerians are now after a spirituality that is manifested in power, since the in- breaking of the divine in the ordinary day life is a proof of the validity and authenticity of a religious life of an individual. In this context, Achunike observes that “People are looking for men of God and spiritual masters and what the

result of their encounter with these men of God will yield for them”<sup>38</sup>. To this end, religious pragmatism is becoming a feature of spirituality and prayer in Nigeria.

#### 4. **PREACHING**

One of the outstanding features of Pentecostalism is a general concentration on preaching, proclamation and teaching of the Christian faith. But much of these are done from apologetic or polemic motives<sup>39</sup>. Nevertheless, there is a serious exertion to expound the Christian faith and moral, leading to much evangelistic renewal.

#### 5. **Liturgy – worship**

According to Hilary Achunike “Liturgy deals with the way people worship God. Pentecostals take worship seriously and allow it to penetrate and influence their lives. Indeed for the Pentecostals, worship is a 2-7-4 experience of God”<sup>40</sup>. The guiding principle for preparing for any liturgical function is built around the experience of the people and not simply in conformity to foreign

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38 cfr. Hilary C. Achunike, *The Influence of Pentecostalism on Catholic Priests and Seminarians in Nigeria*, (Onitsha: African First Publishers Ltd, 2004) p. 99

39 cfr. Nelson T., *which Bible should you read?* (Rockford: TAN Book and Publishers, 2001) p. 10

40 cfr. Hilary C. Achunike, *The Influence of Pentecostalism on Catholic Priests and Seminarians in Nigeria*, (Onitsha: African First Publishers Ltd, 2004) p. 66

styles of worship. Many Nigerian Christians generally welcome the Pentecostal styles of worship, since this seems to respond to African religious sentiments.

**6. Lay participation**

Very much associated with the empowerment of women at the liturgical functions, is a general obligation of the laity to their Christian callings. The epoch when the Church was the exclusive affairs of the clergy is fast coming to an end. The platform of this awareness and justification is the realization that there is no sector of the people of God that is gifted with the monopoly of the spiritual gifts. The Church grows where there are manifestations of spiritual gifts, whether among the laity or the clergy, for the good of the whole community. Now, the awareness is that there is one Spirit but many gifts (cfr. 1 Cor. 12:8-13). Each gift is meant for the good of the whole community. It is therefore a slight to the Holy Spirit, if any member of the community refuses to make his/her charismatic endowments available to the community. Donatus Udoette upholds that it is the responsibility of every Christian to use his charisma for the building up of the Church, since all are members of the Body of Christ. "It is only in doing this that we bring glory and honour to the

body of Christ of which we are members by virtue of our baptism and participation in the Holy Spirit<sup>41</sup>. Other features of Pentecostalism are the use of media, ecclesia consciousness, tithing, speaking in tongues (*glossalis*) among others.

### **ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN INSTITUTED CHURCHES (OAIC)**

The organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) is an Association of African Independent and instituted Churches. The organization has its origin in the work of His Grace, Bishop Markos of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt. The vision of AOIC is to encourage the people of Africa toward:

- building on their cultures and values
- being transformed by good news of Jesus Christ
- being blessed by spirit of God
- creating abundant life in the community for their children and the world.

In 1978, His Holiness Shenouka III of the Coptic Church invited leaders of AOICs from seven countries for a conference in Cairo, where the AOIC was founded, with its headquarters now in Kenya. The basic aim of the

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41 Donatus P. Ukong, the Presence and Impact of Pentecostalism *The Influence of Pentecostalism on Catholic Priests and Seminarians in Nigeria*, (Onitsha: African First Publishers Ltd, 2004) p. 66

organization was teaching. On purpose, development work and political involvement were not considered. The basic pre-occupation was Theological Education, which received much support from ecumenical partners.

The organization of African Instituted Churches has the mission of being together in fellowship and to equip and enable members to preach the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed<sup>42</sup>. The basis of faith is that any African-founded church should believe in:

- Jesus Christ as savior
- The Holy Trinity (the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit as one God)
- Christian doctrine as founded in the Holy Bible (old and new testaments)

Above all, any African Instituted church that upholds these qualifies to be a member of OAIC<sup>43</sup>. Jesus lived and died at 33. Today the organization of African Instituted Churches is 33 years. (1978 – 2011) with chapters in Kenya, Uganda, Egypt, Tanzania, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Madagascar, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria among others. In Nigeria alone, these are the enlisted members:

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42 Constitution of Organization of African Instituted Churches, paragraph 3a.

43 Constitution of Organization of African Instituted Churches, paragraph 3a.

Member Churches of CAN

S/N	
1	Aladura Apostolic Church
2	Aladura Church of God International
3.	Blessed New Jerusalem Church of Nigeria
4.	Celestial Church of Christ
5.	Christ Apostolic Mission Church
6.	Christ Army Church of Nigeria
7.	Christ Church of Light
8.	Christ Faith Mission Church of Nigeria
9.	Christ Gospel Apostolic Church
10.	Christ Gospel Church of Peace (Aladura)
11.	Christ Healing Sabbath Mission
12.	Christ Holy Church International
13.	Christ People Church (Aladura)
14.	Christ Salvation Sabbath Mission
15.	Christ the Lamb Sabbath Galilee International
16.	Christ the Saviour Church Aladura
17.	Christ the Saviour Gospel Church
18.	Church of the Lord (Aladura) Worldwide
19.	Communion of Independent African Church
20.	Community of Yahweh
21.	Divine Healing Evangelistic Crusade
22.	Eternal Sacred Order of Cherubim and Seraphim
23.	Gospel Baptist Conference of Nigeria
24.	Holy Sabbath Church of Christ, Eziana



25.	Holy Spiritual Church of Jesus Christ
26.	Hossana Church of Christ
27.	Inner Circle Christ Mission
28.	Jehovah True Sabbath Mission of Christ the King
29.	Jerusalem Church of the Lord
30.	Living Christ Gospel Mission
31.	Ma'ayo Christ's Church (Aladura)
32.	Messiah Gospel of Cherubim and Seraphim
33.	Mission of True Sabbath of Nigeria
34.	New Eden Light of Jesus Christ
35.	New Temple Spiritual Church of Nigeria
36.	Sacred Cherubim and Seraphim Church
37.	Salem Church of Christ
38.	Soul Rescue Apostolic Church
39.	Spiritual Healing Temple of God
40.	Trinity Council Church
41.	True Covenant of God Sabbath Mission
42.	True Jesus Apostolic Church
43.	United Church of Cherubim & Seraphim
44.	United Spiritual Church of Nigeria
45.	Union Church of the Lord
46.	Union Church of Christ
47.	Universal Praying Band
48.	Wonderful Power of Christ Church

I am sure that the list is not exhaustive as there are some that are not registered with the organization. By means of mathematical calculation and approximation, there are over two thousand and five hundred petty independent denominations of Christendom in Nigeria. For example Abak, a town in Akwa- Ibom state has about four hundred independent churches<sup>44</sup>.

One of the essential characteristics of the nascent African Christianity was the emphasis placed on prayer in the power of the Holy Spirit. The peculiar situation in the Nigerian society of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century contributed immensely to this spiritual consciousness as there was abundant poverty and terrifying diseases. Prayer was seen as the immediate way of combating these evils.

According to Isichei... The sick craved, as they had always done, physical and spiritual healing, and protection from the multitude of evils against which the poor are powerless. When African prophets arose who spoke to these needs from the depths of their own religious consciousness, they counted their converts in hundreds of thousands.<sup>45</sup>

Their emphasis was on dreams and visions. Healing and exorcism were seen as logical

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44 Fidelis K. Obiora, *The Divine Deceit, Business in Religion* (Enugu: Optimal Publishers, 1998) p. 17.

45 Ishichei E., *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present*, (London, SPCK, 1995) p. 179



consequences of the divine intervention through prayer. God reveals his plans and ordinances to those who pray and even reveals his personal name to them, empowering them with the spiritual gifts. Professor H. Olu Atansuyi argues that African Instituted Churches took into cognizance the socio-cultural context of Nigeria both in the theological formulation and pastoral orientation<sup>46</sup>. God intervenes in the world events to order them for the benefit of those who pray to Him.

These churches did not only introduce an intensive practice of prayer into Nigerian Christianity, but also seek to indigenize Christian faith in the country through the religious parameters of African Traditional Religion. His is what has made Harvey Cox to observe that African independent Christians seem proud that they have not forsaken the spiritual customs their ancestors passed on to them before the whites came.

### **TEKAN AND ECWA FELLOWSHIP**

Any discussion concerning TEKAN will necessarily have an explanation on 'Sudan' as a preface. This is because 'Sudan' is used in relationship to the formation of TEKAN in a manner that is different from the ordinary understanding. Sudan as used here is different from the Republic of Sudan, one of the African countries. Rather,

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46 Atansuyi H., Gospel and Culture in the Perspective of African Instituted Churches, in Cyberjournal for Pentecostal Charismatic Research. <http://www.pctii.org/ccyerj/cyberz/aic.html>, accessed on 25/07/2011.

Sudan is used as the vast area, extending from the Niger River to the Nile, two million square miles in area, comprising of Kordofan, Dafur, Wadai, Kenem, Bagirmi, Adamawa, Bornu and Hausa land<sup>47</sup>. The missionaries working in this area operated under "Sudan United Mission". The history of this mission can be traced back to the work of Dr. H. Grattan Guinness who helped found the Sudan Mission in Egypt in 1900<sup>48</sup>. Aside the Sudan United Mission (SUM) were also the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), all working in partnership as *Tarayyar Ekklesiyoyin Kristi a Sudan* (TEKAS), which meant fellowship of churches of Christ in Sudan.

But by 1955, TEKAN (*Tarayyar Ekklesiyoyin Kristi a Nigeria*,) i.e. the Fellowship of Churches of Christ in Nigeria was founded in Randa. At its formation there were six autonomous denominations, all but one of them established by the Sudan mission. These denominations agreed to fellowship together, formulate common policy and participate in joint projects<sup>49</sup>. TEKAN had six member churches at formation with the overall philosophy of unity in diversity. The founding members are: COCIN, CRCN,

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47 *The fellowship of the churches of Christ in Sudan: The meaning of TEKAS* (Jos: Ladapo Press, 1963), p. 6

48 cfr. Samuel Dali, "Mission Activities" in *Churches in Fellowship, the story of TEKAN*, Mark Hopkins and Musa Gaiya (eds.), (Bukuru: Acts, 2005), p. 18.

49 Musa B. Gaiya, 'TEKAN and schisms in member churches', in *Churches in Fellowship, The Story of TEKAN*, p. 165

ERCC, EYN, LCCN and UMCN. As at date, there are six additional members, they are: HEKAN, TEKAN, NKST, MBCN, ECCN and NRC.

Below is a table that gives members of TEKAN and dates admitted as presented by Musa A.B. Gaiya.

S/N	FORMER NAME	PRESENT NAME	DATE ADMITTED
1.	EKAN Benue	Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria, CRN	1955
2.	EKAN Plateau	Church of Christ in Nigeria	1955
3.	EKAN Muri	United Methodist Church of Nigeria, UMCN	1955
4.	EKAN Lutheran	Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigerian, LCCN	1955
5.	EKAN Eastern	Ekklesiyar Yanuwa a Nigeria (i.e. Church of the Brethren)	1955
6.	EKAN Mada Hills	Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ, ERCC	1955
7.	NKST	Nongu u Kristu Ken Sudan hen Tiv (i.e. Church of Christ in Sudan among the Tiv)	1959
8.	HEKAN	Hadaddiyar Eklesiyar Kristi a Nigeria (i.e United Church of Christ of Nigeria, UCCN)	1962
9.	MBCN	Mambila Baptist Convention of Nigeria	1986
10.	NRC	Nigerian Reformed Church	1991

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### Member Churches of CAN

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11.	ECCN	Evangelical Church of Christ in Nigeria	1995
12.	EKAN Takum		

The TEKAN bloc of CAN has another twin sister, the Evangelical Church of West Africa, ECWA. It was founded in 1954 when the SIM-related churches came together to form an indigenous body<sup>50</sup>. The mention of SIM as a mother body explains why CAN in her wisdom has classified TEKAN and ECWA as one, since both are coming from Sudan Interior Mission (SIM). To the glory of Almighty God, ECWA has health facilities, schools including seminaries, rural development department to mention but a few. ECWA church is popular in the north central geo-political zone and beyond.

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50 Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, accessed on 07/08/2011



## CHAPTER

# 3

### *THE MOTTO OF CAN: "THAT ALL MAY BE ONE" (JN. 17:21)*



#### **UNDERSTANDING UNITY**

Christian unity is of fundamental importance in Christendom. While unity in itself is of great importance, to know what exactly is Christian unity is equally of greater importance. This is because, to desire, and to strive for, and to promote as Christian unity, what is not Christian unity at all is a monumental danger of immeasurable loss. And because of the complexity of the matter, even those pursuing Christian unity often seem to speak differently, not uniting on Christian unity.

That, notwithstanding, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in keeping with its mission statement has chosen as its motto the prayer of Jesus for unity of those who believe in him. To my mind, the unity prayed for is both a call and a vocation. A call in the sense of what Jesus enjoins Christians to do, and a vocation in the sense of what He wants Christians to live. This is particularly of the essence because Jesus did not die for a divided sheepfold but a united church, which is

symbolized by His seamless garment that was woven from neck to hem. Unity of Christians could, therefore, be said to be the first, second and last reason for the prayer of Jesus in John 17:21, which CAN has, as its motto with a view to uniting all Christians in Nigeria.

But as Matthew Hassan Kukah queried "Verily, verily what do we mean by unity? Do we want unity? What type of unity? Unity for what purpose? To win our own wars or to win wars for Christ?"<sup>51</sup> I will also add to this list of questions: does unity mean having a universal denomination for all who profess Jesus as Lord and Saviour?

I am cautious to think it is necessarily so. And Pope John Paul II makes available an explanation as to why the unity in question is, and should not be nursing a mega denomination. He says that the various denominations contain and offer religious elements which come from God and which are part of what the spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of people and in cultures<sup>52</sup>. It is certain that people will come up with ways of worshipping God and form churches as the spirit directs, which cannot be stopped. Little wonder, Matthew Hassan Kukah opined: "as far as I understand, unity in terms of all changing into one

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51 Mathew Hassan Kukah, *The Mustard Seed*, Vol. one (Ibadan: Umbrella Books, 1998) p. 24

52 cfr. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, Vatican city, 2000, p. 28

denomination is difficult"<sup>53</sup>, for that matter.

Karl Kumm in 1908, while speaking to some other missionaries on evangelization said "friends, this mission is a united mission and so it unites denominations and unites nations too"<sup>54</sup>. In the same vein, I make bold to say that the unity Christ prayed for is unity in diversity. It means oneness of purpose, understanding and love. Still on purpose, the challenge to Christians is to consider a united intervention in the areas of injustice, poverty, being the voice of the voiceless among other social challenges that impede and frustrate the wellbeing of the citizens. Kukah says to collectively fight for the betterment of man's life and rights is the unity we need<sup>55</sup>.

No one profits when walls of denominational barriers are made higher, when the fences are made stronger and hatred more intense. On the contrary, Christians should eschew unhealthy rivalry and shun divisions. Perhaps cooperation, partnership and collaboration are needed even more to heal the wounds of age long denominational damage inflicted on our spiritual psyche. In achieving this desired unity, there is every reason to down play our holier-than-thou attitude that sticks out like a mighty sore thumb, where every church sees itself as the latest parcel from heaven to

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53 Mathew Hassan Kukah, *The Mustard Seed*, Vol. one, p. 27

54 *Lightbearer*, vol. IV, No. 6, 1908, p. 141.

55 Mathew Hassan Kukah, *The Mustard Seed*, vol. one p. 27.



earth, with the single purpose of cleaning up the mess of others.

The great Apostle of the gentiles, Saint Paul in his letter to Ephesians talks of one God, one faith, one baptism, one God who is the Father (Eph. 4:5). But from our experience, do we have one faith? Then why are Christians beset with daunting doctrinal skirmishes; when doctrine is the child of faith and reason? There is no iota of doubt that any doctrine that is not supported by reason and nourished by faith is any other thing than doctrine.

Paul also mentioned one baptism. But why is that baptism administered in church A is not acceptable in church B? Have we even agreed on the minimum requirement for baptism and those who qualify to be baptized? It is in the face of these raging controversies that it has been re-echoed again and again that multiplicity and rivalry among churches constitute a cog in the wheel of Christian progress and development.

Having explained this much, it needs to be mentioned that a school of thought has it that (and i quote *ad em*) “uniting Christians upon doctrine, is not Christian unity. Agreement of Christians in belief is not Christian unity, uniting or agreeing of Christians upon a platform or statement of belief or of doctrine or in principle is not Christian unity. Uniting of Christians in an agreed assent and submission to an order in church organization or church government is not Christian

unity. Union of purpose or of effort of Christians or among Christians in promoting a cause, is not Christian unity. Free and pleasant fraternal association is not Christian unity"<sup>56</sup>.

This argument would be collapsed into the following:

1. Unity of doctrine and faith, which consists in the common accord of all the faithful in admitting and believing all that the teaching church proposes to them as revealed or confirmed by Jesus Christ.
2. Unity of government, which produces unity of communion, and which consists in the submission of all the faithful to their respective Bishops and in particular to the Roman Pontiff, the supreme Head of the church.

The insinuation is that "to break the unity of faith, by rejecting even only one point of doctrine constitutes heresy; to break the unity of government, by rejecting the authority of the legitimate heads produces schism"<sup>57</sup>. The argument therefore posits that Christian unity is nothing less, nothing more than divine unity itself: "the unity of the spirit". Note that it is not unity from the spirit. That is, it is not a unity of people, derived from the spirit. Nor is it primarily, a unity caused among people by their possessing the spirit. It is the unity of the

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<sup>56</sup> <http://home.netcom.com/csdachurch/unity.html>, accessed on 01/09/2011.

<sup>57</sup> <http://home.netcom.com/csdachurch/unity.html>, accessed on 01/09/2011.

spirit Himself. It is the unity of the individual Christian with, and in the father and the son"<sup>58</sup>.

My opinion on these arguments is that Christian unity can only be comprehensive if it is both vertical and horizontal. Vertical among Christians as earlier explained and horizontal between them and their creator. The connecting rod in all these vertical and horizontal relationship is truth, since truth by its nature unites and without unity, either truth cannot exist or (when it does) apparent internal inconsistency gives appearance of compromise<sup>59</sup>.

This presents a problem for Christendom because it is clearly not united and God spoke of the unity of His followers as giving witness to the Son's mission from the Father (Mt. 28:19-20, Jn. 10:16) Saint Paul spoke of this as a necessity. (1 Cor. 1:10, Eph. 4:1-6). There could be two possible reasons for this disunity: either the work plan is faulty or the workers to varying degrees are at fault. Christians of different backgrounds can be very devout yet refuse to consider the viability of any point that challenges a position that they find comfortable<sup>60</sup>. Therefore, the problems cannot be the work-plan unless someone has the temerity to accuse God of sin.

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58 <http://home.netcom.com/csdachurch/unity.html>, accessed on 01/09/2011.

59 <http://mat.1618.freeyellow.com/unity1.html>, accessed on 23/05/2011

60 <http://matt1618.freeyellow.com/unity1.html>, accessed on 23/05/2011

## **NECESSITY OF CHRISTIAN UNITY**

Truth by its very nature is unitive not divisive and Our Lord not only prayed for unity among His believers (John 17) but He also warned that divided houses could not stand (Matt. 12:25-29; Mark 3:23-26; Luke 11:14-20). There is a fundamental rule in logic that is called the "Law of Non-Contradiction" and it could be argued that by implication our Lord was teaching this law when he spoke about Satan casting out Satan. The law of Non-Contradiction applies absolutely in these passages because it basically states that something cannot be both true and false. This is what happens if Satan casts out Satan – he contradicts himself. Therefore through self-contradiction his kingdom cannot stand. Well, what is happening when you have thousands of Christian groups professing different beliefs and all claiming to follow "the Bible"? How does this square with the exhortations not only from the Scriptures but also from the writings of the early Church Fathers about the necessity of maintaining unity?

Sadly, most Christians – regardless of affiliation – are ill-equipped for nurturing an atmosphere of greater understanding. This is primarily because most Christians do not seem willing to take the time to learn what their fellow Christians believe. In addition, they have the view that "it does not matter what you say because I am right anyway" which of course only causes more problems and exasperates the scandal of Christian

disunity. It is important to remember that the manner in which the truth is spoken about to others is just as important as the truth itself. The focus cannot be on individual doctrines but instead must go deeper than that to the very core of the differences in religious paradigms. Otherwise, the same methods or understandings will drive every area of difference and the result will be constantly reinventing the wheel.

As authority is the subject that affects all areas of difference, its relationship to achieving and maintaining unity is one of the subjects that is critical if unity is to be achieved. To the extent that it is possible, there is the need for us to check our personal biases and approach this subject humbly with a desire to do a part and to repair the tattered cloak of Christendom. Only then can true progress actually be made because it is God that will reunite those who profess His name, not us. But we have to do our part to allow Him to work through us (Eph. 2:10, Gal. 2:20). Otherwise, we will only aid in continuing the scandal of disunity, which compromises the credibility of Christ to the rest of the world.

### **CHRISTIAN UNITY: THE TRINITARIAN PARADIGM**

All the five blocs that make up CAN subscribe to the belief in one True God. This will among other things facilitate Christian unity, since the trinity is an apt paradigm for Christian unity. It is against this background that we shall consider a discussion on the

trinity, not minding the advice that whosoever wants to write or speak of the trinity must keep before his eyes the prudent warning of Saint Augustine. For he says: *nowhere else are more dangerous errors made or research more difficult than the trinity*".

The Christian belief in the trinity affirms that while God is one, He exists as three persons: the unknown God, creator and source of all life. Jesus Christ who revealed the Father and the Holy Spirit, the bond of love between the Father and Son, is always at work in transforming the world according to God's purpose<sup>61</sup>. The belief in God as three-in one is as old as Christianity itself<sup>62</sup>. It needs to be mentioned that the word trinity did not appear as a theological term till near the end of the second century. It was first used as 'Trias' by Theophilus, the Bishop of Antioch in AD 180 and later by Tertullian as *trinitas*<sup>63</sup> to specify that God exists in three persons<sup>64</sup>.

Trinitarian monotheism has it that there is one substance in three persons. We cannot talk of three substances because that will be tantamount to tritheism. The doctrine of the blessed trinity proceeds

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51 Angel Cardinal Herrera, (ed), *The Preacher's Encyclopedia – Sunday after Ascension to Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost*, (Aberdeen: University press, 1965) p. 145.

52 Joseph Domen, The Concept of Trinity and its Implication for Christian Communication in Indian context, accessed on 29/08/2011 <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticles.asp?title=2454>

53 Louis George Mylene, *The Holy Trinity*, (London: Longman Green and Co., 1916) p. 62

54 Greevarghese M. Osthathios, *Sharing God and a Saving word* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1995) p. 1

from the central tenet of the Judeo- Christian faith, expressed in the Jewish *Shema*: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one God." 'One' here is *ehud*: not arithmetic but a unity in diversity. This, therefore, provides the basis for the Trinitarian dictum, *Opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* (the external acts of the trinity are indivisible): is completed and *servatodiscrimine atordine Personarum* (the distinction and order of the persons being preserved). Indeed the force of the doctrine of the trinity rests in the equal intimacy of the Godhead and the diversity of the persons<sup>65</sup>.

### **BIBLICAL BASIS OF UNITY**

The word Trinity is not found in the Bible. In the Old Testament according to K.V. Mathew, we don't have any definitive description about the nature of God. In the expression '*Eheh*'<sup>66</sup> and '*ousia*' of God is denoted not by a static being but a dynamic creative becoming. The Hebrew word *Elohim* is plural. So the single Godhead composes the majesty of divine plurality. The nature of God as it is shown in the book of Genesis implies that God is a family (Genesis 5:2-3); God is one (Deut. 6:4; Ex. 20:3). What we see in the Old Testament is only a foretaste or glimpse of the Trinity, when viewed from

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65 John Thurner, *A Detection of the Trinity*, (Flemington: The Peternosten Press, 1984) p 9

66 Mathew K.V, "*Trinity – Semantic Consideration*" (Mavelikkara: Youth movement o. Indiana Orthodox Church, 1989) p. 72.

the vantage point of New Testament. There are many who see the Trinity in the plural form of the divine name *Elohim*. But there is no doctrine of the Trinity in the Old Testament.

The early Christians had a Trinitarian experience. For them the Spirit of God was personal. In the fourth gospel, the divinity of Christ is explicitly stated (John 1:1, 1:118), and Jesus introduced to them *paracletos* as Comforter, Councilor and Advocate. Arthur W. Wainwright says that in the New Testament Christ is called 'Lord', in the Septuagint it is a title often used as an equivalent of Yahweh<sup>67</sup>. The epithets 'Lord' and 'God' are ascribed to Christ in the New Testament. The triadic passages, Matt. 28:19, 2Chorinthians 12:14, Acts 2:33 testify to the Triune God.

Still there are arguments among scholars that the doctrine of Trinity has no real biblical basis. Cyril C. Richardson argues, "It is not a doctrine specifically to be found in the New Testament. It is a creation of the Fourth Century Church"<sup>68</sup>. John Hick has the same view: "the doctrine of incarnation and Trinity may turn out to be an intellectual construction"<sup>69</sup>; hence he denies its biblical foundation. But according to H.P. Ownen, "the

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57 Jeremy Ive, What on earth is trinity? The trinity in everyday life, <http://www.quadibet.net/articleslive-trinity.shtml>, accessed on 28/08/2011

58 Arthur W. Wainwrightm, *The Trinity in The New Testament*, (London: SPCK, 1962) p. 79

59 Cyril C. Richardson, *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (New York: Abingdon Press, n. d) p. 17



Doctrine of the Trinity is firmly grounded in the New Testament"<sup>70</sup>. He argues that 18 references to the Holy Spirit out of 62 in the Book of Acts describe Christ as a person. Another argument is that all the baptisms in the Acts of Apostles were in the name of Christ and almost all the epistles of St. Paul start with *binitarianism*<sup>71</sup>. It shows that *trinitarianism* took time to develop. This shift from *binity* to *trinity* supports the understanding of Cyril C. Richardson.

### PERICHORESIS APPROACH TO TRUINE DIVERSITY

In the theological manner of speaking, *perichoresis* was first used in the context of Christology to describe the relation between the divine and the human natures of Christ. Jeremy Ive is of the view that the explicit application of *peirchoresis* in Trinitarian thinking is comparatively late<sup>72</sup>, yet it takes us to the heart of God as persons-in-relationship, putting communion rather than an 'unknowable somewhat' at the heart of who God is, which is very much the vision of Jesus' high-priestly prayer in John 17<sup>73</sup>. In his submission, which is sound and logical, Amado L. Picardal explains that

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70 Huw P. Owen, *Christian Theism*, (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1985) p. 142

71 Huw P. Owen, *Christian Theism*, (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1985) p. 53

72 B. Jeremy Ive, What on earth is the trinity? The trinity in everyday life, *Quodlibet journal*, vol. 6 November 1, January – March 2004, <http://www.quodlibet.net/articleslive-trinity.shtml>, accessed on 28/08/2011

73 Jeremy Ive, What on earth is the trinity? The trinity in everyday life *Quodlibet Journal*, vol. 6 November 1, January – March 2004, <http://www.quodlibet.net/articleslive-trinity.shtml>, accessed on 28/08/2011

*Perichoresis* is a Greek term which was first used in the Trinitarian language in the sixth century. It conveys the idea that 'each person of the trinity contains the other two, each one penetrates the other as is penetrated by them'<sup>74</sup>. It is therefore no heresy to say communion of the three persons is the *perichoresis* of one in the others, for the others, by the others and with the others. This makes it easier to understand the unity which the divine nature guarantees: the union of persons bound up one with the others in eternal communion.

Even in some cultures, there are local sayings that depict *perichoresis*. For instance there is a Cebuano saying "*Any Dios usa ra, apan wala mag-inusara*" (God is one but not alone). This shows that we can use even the understanding of trinity from this vintage point to promote unity.

Donald Gelpi considers the Truine God as the Perfection of the loving, interpersonal communion to which we are called to as a Christian community. It is through such that conceiving the trinity as the community of the three divine persons is theologically legitimate and pastorally helpful. The idea is to make Christians aspire that just as there is Trinitarian *Koinonia*, there should be a necessary connection that, guarantees ecclesia *Koinonia*.

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74 Amado L. Picardal, The Trinity as a Paradigm for the Basic Ecclesial Communities, [http://www.picardal.bravepages.com/theo\\_trinity&BEChm](http://www.picardal.bravepages.com/theo_trinity&BEChm)

The aim is to stimulate us to inter-denominational cooperation, since the triune God represents followership, love, co-operation, participation, interaction and sharing.<sup>75</sup>

## **VATICAN II AND POPE JOHN PAUL II ON CHRISTIAN UNITY**

The second Vatican council which took place from 1963 to 1965 has remained remarkable in the annals of the Catholic Church. The Visionary Pope John XXIII Who convened the council but never saw the end made a striking remark at the opening session. According to him, unity of the church was the compelling motive for convoking the council, and that the unity of Christians is a major concern of the Catholic Church.

Pope John XXIII did not only make this statement but also invited non-Catholics as observers, which points to his inner desire for Christian unity. As the council progressed, the numbers of Christians not in communion with the Catholic Church swell up to as close as one hundred<sup>76</sup>. According to Cardinal Franz König they had a positive influence on the ecumenical climate and their role grew steadily as the council

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75 Amando L. Picardal, The Trinity as a Paradigm for the Basic Ecclesial Communities [http://www.picardal.bravepages.com/theo\\_trinity&BEChm](http://www.picardal.bravepages.com/theo_trinity&BEChm)

76 Joseph Oomen, The Concept of Trinity and its Implication for Christian Communication in Indian Context, [http://www.religion\\_online.or/showarticles.asp?title=2454](http://www.religion_online.or/showarticles.asp?title=2454), accessed on 29/08/2011.

progressed<sup>77</sup>.

At the service in St. Peter's Basilica on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1965 that marked the end of the council, Cardinal König recalled that there he was one of the small group on the altar with Pope Paul VI. After asking the representatives of the ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople to join him there, the Pope announced that the Papal bull of 1054, which had declared the Great Schism between the Western and Eastern Church, was now null and void. I can still hear the thundering bust of spontaneous applause with which this announcement was received. Without intending to open us any apologetic toolkit, I think this was the Catholic Church's way of saying sorry for whatever might have been her contribution towards Schisms and at same time a clarion call for Christian unity. In all sincerity of purpose, if Christians don't fear that truth might endanger truth, then blame for the scandal of disunity among Christians hangs on the shoulders of all.

Combing through the Vatican two documents; the Decree on ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) and the church in the modern world (*Lumen Gentium*), all promulgated on the same date, 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1964 speak volumes on the desire of the Council Fathers to ensure Christian unity and dialogue with the non-Christian world.

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77. Denis Rudd, *Restoring unity*, <http://www.vatican2voice.org/6unity/restoreunity.htm> accessed on 02/09/2011.

At this point, these questions beg for an answer: How can a divided church heal a divided world? How can it heal wounds, break down barriers, play its role in bringing the Kingdom?

Blessed Pope John Paul II made remarkable imprint toward Christianity unity. This culminated with historic encyclical, *ut-unum sint*- that they may be one, released on 25<sup>th</sup> of May, 1995. The encyclical aside its masterly presentation, re-emphasized the *Lund principle*, enunciated as far back as 1952 calling on Christians to act together in all matters except those in which a deep difference of conviction compel them to act separately<sup>78</sup>. But in what ways can churches and individual Christians not in full communion act together?

1. In *ut unum sint*, Pope John Paul II answered by saying Christians should pray together “when brothers and sisters who are not on perfect communion with one another come together to pray...then prayer is the soul of the whole ecumenical movement” (UUS No. 21) “If Christians, despite their divisions can grow evermore united in common prayer around Christ they will grow in awareness of how little divides

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78. Cardinal Franz Konig, 'it must be the Holy Spirit', *The Tablet*, (London) 21-28 December, 2002.

them in comparison to what unites them" (UUS, No. 22) Pope John Paul II even makes a soul touching confession that "the Catholic church acknowledges and confesses the weaknesses of, her members conscious that their sins are many betrayals of and obstacles to the accomplishment of the saviour's plan" (UUS No. 3).

2. By studying together, as in some parts of the Christian world, there is now an established tradition of sharing and growing together through Lenten and other study groups and courses. Such study too, can help Christians realize that what divides them is much less than what we have in common. It is important such a study should be undertaken in an atmosphere of the spirit, for the Holy Spirit will want to be busy on these occasions. So, when you are a member of such a gathering and your neighbor is speaking, it is important to listen carefully with generosity and humility, especially if she is expressing something which is new to your understanding. And the speaker too must listen back because the spirit might be speaking back to him or her.
3. By working together: This may be through collaboration in attending to the many needs of the community in which we live. You will recall that

Matthew Hassan Kukah had mentioned this earlier. And as if not enough, other church authorities maintain that "In the eyes of the world, co-operation among Christians becomes a form of common Christian witness and means of evangelization which benefits all involved" (UUS No. 40)

### **SCANDAL OF DISUNITY**

Lack of unity is a serious obstacle to the witness of evangelization. Division contradicts the truth of the gospel, an essential element of which is the call to unity, so that non-believers who meet missionaries each preaching different versions of the gospel will think it to be a source of division despite its presentation as a way of love<sup>79</sup>. Pope Paul VI puts it this way: As evangelizers, we must offer Christ's faithful not the image of the people divided and separated by unedifying quarrels, but the image of the people who are mature in faith and capable of finding a meeting point beyond the real tension, thanks to a shared, sincere and disinterested search for truth.

But how problematic is the disunity among Christians? It is the greatest scandals of all because it contradicts the very Scriptures that all, true Christians claim to reverence. Before his arrest, Our Lord is

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79. Denis Rudd, Restoring unity, <http://www.vatican2voice.org/6unity/restoreunity.htm> accessed on 02/09/2011.

recorded as praying the following prayer, which is sometimes referred to as a "priestly prayer for unity" in John 17:21.

It is not easy, if not impossible, to see how thousands of denominations can be anything but schism practically institutionalized within Christianity over the last five hundred years. How is this situation in any way keeping in accord with the clear wishes of the Lord that His believers be one as He and the Father are one? The division among Christians is not solely the blunder of any one group among those who profess the name of Christ. However, all of the areas that are involved in these divisions can be reduced to one and that is the sin of pride. Pride is one of the capital sins, but it is also at the root of all sins because without it there is no other sin, as sin is rebellion against the order established by God: it is a rebellion against legitimate authority. The sin of pride is present any time someone feels that they have learned all they need to learn about any subject and that includes Christianity and the differences between Christians. But most important of all, the sin of pride manifests itself whenever the individual takes the attitude that "it does not matter what you say" to others when it comes to dealing with the challenges of their mode of thinking or beliefs.

Granted Christians today are not killing one another over differences anymore. However there is still the same stubborn unwillingness to listen to their



brethren in Christ. Since all Christians believe that it is God who is the builder of His Church (Matt. 16:18) and that we are in his service in the capacity of workmanship (Eph. 2:10; 1 Cor. 3:10-15), the problem must be attributed to us. Otherwise, we would be imputing the possibility of error unto the Lord. To use an analogy, it needs to be said that the map of Christendom is not faulty and that it is the readers of the map who are at fault. After all, God is perfect while our own wills are so often being clouded by sin. The scriptures mention the errors of man's pride in many areas and all Christians would confess that this is the reason for the disunity (as pride is the beginning of all sin or dissension). Over time, the different copies of the same map have become smudged in some areas – sometimes intentionally and sometimes accidentally – this is one problem indeed.

The astute among us would probably note that every map has a legend so if we follow the legend, we can find our way. This is certainly true. However, many people feel that they can provide their own interpretations of the map irrespective of the legend and its symbols. The reason for this is because they are either raised to believe this or have been persuaded to believe that the symbols of the map could be whatever they wanted them to be. Or they fall in with others who do this and they accept their interpretations as being the “true interpretations”.

Christendom is basically dividable into roughly 4

groups. One of these groups has a wide doctrinal spectrum to it (Protestants). The other two (Orthodox and Catholics) have a much greater degree of unity between them even though they seem often times to want to exaggerate the extent of their disunity as much as the first group wants to exaggerate their degree of unity. The last group is the Pentecostal, which are totally different. Obviously all cannot move in the same direction without some unifying interpretation of the symbols, provided by the legend and the more agreement as to the meanings of the symbols the greater degree of unity will result because truth unifies. Among the first group there is a wide diversity of interpretations of the 'map' because they do not believe that there is an official interpretation of the symbols in the map of the legend. This is despite the fact that most of these in the first group accept an official interpretation of some parts of the legend (Trinity, New Testament (NT) Canon of Scripture, Hypostatic Union, and Original Sin) but not others (Apostolic Succession, Real Presence, Old Testament (OT) Canon of Scripture, etc). In doing this the members of the first group defend this inconsistency by deluding themselves into believing that the official interpretation they accept are because they discerned them from of the map.

Compounding this problem further, many of these people in the first group actually claim that the legend contradicts the "plain meaning" of the map. The reason

why there are so many different and contradictory ways of interpreting the “perspicuous” map should be obvious. This anarchy is inexcusable and is frankly sinful for it makes the word of God a joke to those who do not believe and a yoke to those who believe.

Where diversity of doctrine is found, there then must the corruption both of the Scriptures and the expositions thereof they could not possibly have affected their diversity of teaching in any other way than by having a difference in the means whereby they taught. As in their case, corruption in doctrine could not possibly have succeeded without a corruption also of its instruments, so to ourselves also integrity of doctrine could not have accrued, without integrity in those means by which doctrine is managed...one man perverts the scriptures with his hand, another their meaning by his explosion<sup>80</sup>.

The sages, it is often said, can see no answer to religion. But the trouble with our sages is not that they cannot see the answer; it is that they cannot even see the riddle. They are like children, largely naïve as to notice nothing paradoxical in the playful assertion that a door is not a door. The modern latitudinarians speak, for instance, about authority in religion not only as if there were no reason in it, but as if there had never been any reason for it. Apart from seeing its philosophical basis,

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80 Pope Paul IV, *Evangelii, Nuntiandi*, No. 7.

they cannot even see its historical cause. But the modern critics of religious authority are like men who should attack the police without ever having heard of burglars. For there is a great and possible peril to the human mind: a peril as practical as burglary. Against it religious authority was reared, rightly or wrongly, as a barrier. And against it something certainly must be reared as a barrier, if our race is to avoid ruin.

That peril is that the human intellect is free to destroy itself. Just as one generation could prevent the very existence of the next generation, by all entering a monastery or jumping into the sea, so one set of thinkers can in some degree prevent further thinking by teaching the next generation that there is no validity in any human thought. It is idle to talk always of the alternative of reason and faith. Reason is itself a matter of faith. It is an act of faith to assert that our thoughts have any relation to reality at all. If you are merely a skeptic, you must sooner or later ask yourself the question, 'why should anything go right; even observation and deduction? Why should not good logic be as misleading as bad logic? The young skeptic says, "I have a right to think for myself". But the old skeptic, the complete skeptic, says "I have no right to think for myself. I have no right to think at all". These are facts of life!

To re-establish Christianity as a force that can overcome the evils of society, there is need for

Christians to unite. However, this unity is not based on the “least common denominator”. No, to avoid further ruin what is needed is to again establish a substantial unity akin to what Jesus prayed for in John 17. This will not be possible unless there is a unifying force above the individual not only in theory but also in practice. Unity though does not just happen but it must be held together by some kind of authority structure. This authority structure as in the case of Nigeria is CAN, in collaboration with other church leaders.

## CHAPTER

# 4

### *CONTRIBUTIONS OF CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT*



As an association that speaks for the huge Christian population in the country, CAN unarguably has a part to play in the development of the country; even though this is not spelt out in the constitution. It is in this wise that I will be fast to point out that CAN has the responsibility of describing the road to travel, so that the Nation does not drive into a ditch. And where the nation has, as others will argue, then CAN will have to unavoidably describe the ditch so that a 'fallen society' can dig itself out. The obvious question to ask is, does CAN have the prerequisite expertise to do this? The monosyllabic answer is YES. This is because CAN is blessed with a followership comprising of people from all walks of life with gargantuan reservoir of potentials. All that is needed is to tie together the potentials of the followership under a religious banner; since this has not been achieved politically.

The role to be played by CAN to kick-start speedy socio-economic development of the country would

mean being positive in the course of National development in a manner that government and other development partners will find it a useful ally in executing the national project of development. The second role earlier mentioned, which is by every means critical is how to pull and uproot Nigeria out of the stocky mud of under-development, occasioned by mal-administration. This Herculean task would mean reconstructing what has been destroyed by providing an adequate road map and philosophy which will put Nigeria once again on the path of greatness, that will enable the country compete among comity of states. This is also what the transformation agenda of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan seeks to achieve.

At this point, I insist on resisting the temptation to be held hostage by the controversy over what exactly is development. But the baseline understanding of development as used in this work is improving on an existing bad situation for the good of all and ensuring enhancement of human life in all ramifications. On this note the contributions of CAN are examined in the areas of provision of software of development, health mobilization and politics.

### **PROVISION OF SOFTWARE OF DEVELOPMENT**

Development is generally classified into soft and hardwares. This language of classification is an offshoot of the prevailing computer jargon that is commonly

invoked. The hardware of development includes tangible aspects of development such as roads, hospitals, safe and potable water. These are what our politicians call dividends of democracy

Conversely, what is considered the software of development is the provision of the intangible aspects of development like trust, respect, tolerance, unity among others. These are core values that hold the nation together. Values have an indispensable role to play in National development. This is satisfactorily put in plain words by India philosophy as quoted by Vincent Nanapak Fazing that, "as a man acts (*Karma*), as he behaves, so does he become. Who so does good, becomes good, who so ever does evil becomes evil... holy... as he desire so will his will be; as is his will, so will he act (*Karma*); as he acts, so will he attain"<sup>81</sup>. Over the years CAN has consciously and conscientiously stimulated people to work for unity, to *will* unity and to attain unity of purpose for the overall good of all.

Another value worth mentioning that CAN has promoted over the years is harmony. The association, while respecting the idiosyncratic peculiarities of members has entrenched harmony thereby teaching cooperation and unity in diversity. This is meant to be extended to other faiths since all of us share same human nature.

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<sup>81</sup> cfr. Vincent Nankpak Fazing, *Mahatma Gandhi, Non-Possession and Consecrated Poverty*; (Jos: Fab Educational Books, 2008) p. 13



The thrust of all these is to create an enabling environment in which people can develop their full potential and live productive and creative lives in accord with their needs and interest, while respecting the umbilical cord that bind us together either as Christian – Christian or Christian-Muslim.

### **CAN AND CHRISTIAN HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (CHAN)**

Provision of healthcare delivery is crucial to any effort aimed at uplifting the standard of living of the people. The prosperity of a society is anchored on good health. That explains why it is often said that health is wealth. The reason is that the physical well-being of the people is essential to their ability to live sustainable and meaningfully productive lives in society.

Mindful of this, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, the Christian Council of Nigeria and the Northern Medical Advisory Council, fondly called founding fathers formed the Christian Health Association of Nigeria (CHAN) in 1973, with the mission of presenting views of Nigerian Voluntary Medical Organizations to Government<sup>82</sup>.

CHAN is not-for-profit service organization, charged with the responsibility of coordinating church

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82 cfr. Vincent Nankpak Fazing, *Mohatma Gandhi: Non-Possession and Consecrated Poverty*, (Jos: Fab Educational Books, 2008), p. 13

sponsored health care throughout Nigeria. In accordance with its mission statement, CHAN assists its member institutions in reaching more people, especially the unreached with health services that are good and affordable and patient friendly. CHAN as an interdenominational organization and its members believe that the mission of providing health service is by every means a continuation of the healing ministry of Christ, to all Nigerians irrespective of religious affiliation.

CHAN is by nature an umbrella organization; hence it facilitates cooperation among members who are from 23 major churches on health matters at local, state and federal levels. The organization builds capacity to better serve health needs of the people of Nigeria, irrespective of gender, ethnic origin or religious affiliation<sup>83</sup>. The greatest achievement of CAN could be deduced as bringing diverse Christian denominations, showing both ecumenical unity and the will to act effectively with one voice.

Legally registered with Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) in 1978, CHAN's member institutions constitute the oldest and largest health care institutions in Nigeria, second only to the government. CHAN currently has almost 400 member institutions,

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<sup>83</sup> Christian Health Association of Nigeria, <http://channigeria.org/aboutus.html> accessed on 23/08/2011

comprising of 140 hospitals, 187 clinics delivering maternal and primary health care 23 rural health programmes and 4 leprosaria<sup>84</sup>. CHAN can also boast of oldest health facility in Nigeria: the Sacred Heart Hospital, Lantoro Abeokuta, Ogun State which was established in 1880 by the Catholic French society of African Missions to cater for the needs of a leper colony. By 1979, CHAN established drug supply service, now CHAN medical pharmacy. Other series of CHAN are administered through geographical zones (A, B, C, & D) with zonal headquarters in Numan, Jos, Emekudu and Ibadan. CHAN's central office is in Jos, Plateau State which was commissioned on 20<sup>th</sup> November, 1987<sup>85</sup>.

Aside these joint health ventures individual member churches have other health facilities provide healthcare delivery to the people. In this way, they contribute to the reduction of health burden that would have taken its toll on individual purse of the people. There are many places in Nigeria that mission hospitals and clinics are the only health facilities available as government is totally absent in this wise.

In this connection, one would suggest that government should improve on the partnership (where CHAN and government member churches and member institutions

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84 Christian Health Association of Nigeria, <http://chanigeria.org/aboutus.html> accessed on 23/08/2011

85 Christian Health Association of Nigeria, <http://chanigeria.org/aboutus.html> accessed on 23/08/2011

it exists) between it and these health facilities so as to enhance health service delivery to the people. We need be mindful that CHAN is an ecumenical organization. It is not a single denominational affair.

## **MOBILIZATION**

Christian Association of Nigeria, even by its definition leaves no doubt on its nature as a religious organization. And as always, religion provides a powerful motivation for many people to act. It is in this wise that religion equips many people of the world with not only moral guidance but also with the will to improve their lives. On this bases, CAN has been a veritable tool of mobilization. For instance, during the period of Yar'Adua's ill health, CAN mobilized prayers for his quick recovery which was observed in churches. Other similar prayer related occasions include the Celebration of Independence Day (1<sup>st</sup> October) and making of Democracy Day (May 29th).

In the area of politics, CAN has been actively involved in sensitizing the people on the expediency of showing greater interest in the voters' registration exercise and in encouraging them to demonstrate genuine interest in elective offices and turn out massively to vote for credible candidates of their choice vying for the positions of governance at all levels. This was done in the last election by the south-south states through aggressive media campaign and publicity,

rallies and series of meetings<sup>86</sup>.

## **POLITICS AND NIGERIA AT CROSSROADS: THE SIGNATURE OF CAN**

Two major political developments have threatened the unity of Nigeria more than any other. These events are the Nigerian Civil war and the ill health and eventual demise of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. The mention of these events is not in any way to undermine the gravity of the annulment of the 1993 presidential election allegedly won by Chief M.K.O Abiola, an event popularly known as "**June 12**". The emphasis on the other two is because of their unusual idiosyncrasy.

While the civil war was indeed a war with guns and even explosives, the Yar'Adua's ill health saga was a war, but not with guns. The former lasted longer than the later and had more lives and properties destroyed. The later too, had its political casualties. In both events, it was the north and the rest of Nigerians, not minding political interest across the country that seemingly comprised this outlook. It is painful that while Yar'Adua struggled to cheat death and to have his health restored, suspicion in the country was elevated to doctrine, secrecy honoured as never before and self-

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86 Bauna Peter Tanko, *The Christian Association of Nigeria and the Challenge of Ecumenical Imperative*, (Jos: Fab Anich Nigeria Ltd, 1991) p. 130



aggrandizement enthroned as ruler, and in majesty determined not only events but also *how* and *when* they happened.

This accounts for why the president was smuggled into the country from Saudi Hospital under the cover of darkness. His battle to hold unto life was tantamount to the nation's quest for survival as his uncertain fate of survival was almost entertained whether mistakenly or not, as the uncertain fate of Nigeria to continue as one united nation bound in freedom, peace and unity. This is because at that point, the man and the nation were almost harmonized into one. Therefore, the crisis of one was the crisis of the other. Little wonder, Tony Anenih was quick to point out that 'the fate of our president is tied to the fate of the country. National security, economy and other critical aspects of national life depend on the wellbeing of the president'<sup>87</sup>.

However, a shocking difference was made when the man answered the call to glory and kissed bye-bye to life. Funeral rites were religiously observed in his honour as Nigerians stood still for losing a man of dignity and integrity. While he was being lowered into the earth, ironically the nation was still sneezing with life, rejecting any requiem, and settling for the controversy of whether it is a failed or failing state. In the midst of all these, the rumour mill was rife and facts also emerged,

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<sup>87</sup> Chris Oluoh, 'Yar'Adua's Health Crisis: Resignation as the way out, <http://saharareporters.com/articles> accessed on 2/09/2011.

dividing the citizens sharply into the tripod lines of party, regionalism and religion (PRR).

## **PARTY**

President Umaru Musa Yar Adua who died at 58 came to power on the platform of the People's Democratic Party, the acclaimed largest party in Africa. The party which has been in power since 1999 has what is popularly referred to as zoning formula enshrined in the party's Constitution. A common understanding of the zoning formula is that a given geo-political zone will hold a particular position while other zones too will have position allotted to them. In other words zoning is simply sharing key positions based on geo-political zone arrangement.

By this arrangement, erstwhile President Olusegun Matthew Aremu Obasanjo (mis)ruled for 8 and it was the turn of the North to take a shot at the presidency and to occupy the coveted Aso Villa for another 8 years. Yar Adua died when he had just spent 3 years of the 8 years. His death re-echoed in mind, the immortal lines of the cerebral poet, John Dryden who said "all human things are subject to decay. When fate summons, even monarch must obey". And true to it, Yar Adua obeyed, putting to rest the disquiet that inundated the nation as to whether he was alive or dead. At this point, it was certain: the doyen was no more. This again opened up another heated debate in the nation's life, namely

shopping for a northern successor who will complete the 8 years reign, in respect to the zoning formula.

An anonymous Northern chieftain of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was very blunt on this. According to him "going by the zoning arrangement which the ruling party has stuck to since 1999, the search for candidates is expected to be restricted to candidates from the Northern part of the country"<sup>88</sup>. In a related development, another party stalwart of northern extraction told Wole Adeyemo that "...PDP has a zoning formula which leaves power in the hands of the North till 2015. The elders and political elites in the North say this time around, they will not accept anything less"<sup>89</sup>. One can now appreciate why Tanko Yakassi will warn that "North will not support Jonathan"<sup>90</sup>. He is not from the north.

Meantime, the then vice president, later acting President and now President Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan took over the reins of power on the ground of doctrine of necessity. One thing become evident, the party's zoning formula and the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria were not in agreement. The unquestionable supremacy of the constitution over and above any other document (arrangement) saw one who

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88 Chris Oluoh, "Yar'Adua's Health Crisis: Resignation as the way out," <http://saharareporters.com/articles> accessed on 2/09/2011.

89 Babajide Kolade – Otitoju, *the News*, May 17, 2010, p. 24

90 Wole Adeyemo, *Tell*, April 26, 2010, p. 23



is not from the North at the helm of affairs, as the number one citizen. But this, only prepared the ground for the battle of whether Goodluck Jonathan will run or not run for the 2011 presidential race, for no other determinant than zoning. A survey from 6 newspapers randomly selected, from 7<sup>th</sup> May, a day after Jonathan was sworn in as the president to August showed that 128 items were not in favour<sup>91</sup> of him running for the president. But whether he indeed heeded to this or not, remains a story for another day.

## REGIONALISM

Regionalism according to *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* is the desire of the people who live in a particular region of a country to have more political and economic independence. By virtue of president Yar'Adua coming from the North gave the impression that the North was to benefit from his administration politically, economically and otherwise. (Do not ask me if this was achieved). Therefore, his death automatically meant loosing these benefits, which 'powers that be' were ready to go to war for.

For the purpose of contextualizing this discussion in a manner devoid of ambiguity, the north as used here can be understood in either geographical or political sense. As a geographical term, it comprises the area

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91 Dayo Aiyetan, *Tell*, April 19, 2010, p. 23

north of the rivers Niger and Benue. In a political sense, it coincides with the former northern region of Nigeria and includes a large area immediately south of these rivers. The region, once a separated territory known as the protectorate of Northern Nigeria, was formally abolished when the country was divided into twelve states on the eve of the Biafran war in 1967.

Reverend father Matthew Hassan Kukah, now the Bishop Catholic Diocese of Sokoto made a profound statement whose veracity and validity became evident during the days of Yar'Adua's health challenge. According to him "the north is the focal point of Nigerian politics, whether one defines it in terms of the north/south intrigues or on the basis of Islam and Christianity"<sup>92</sup>. Events after the demise of Yar'Adua were either directed at widening the yawning gap between the North and South or Christians and Muslims. The notoriety of the region in using religion to execute its political agenda is at times with outright impunity, and readiness to inflict the most despicable assault on whoever is not ready to cow-in. For instance when the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) got fed up with the gimmicks of the northern ruling elites and went into alliance with the National Congress for Nigeria and Cameroun (NCNC) which was a southern party, the

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92 cfr. Bauna Peter Tanko, *The Christian Association of Nigeria and the challenge of the Ecumenical Imperative* (Jos: Fab Anieh Nig. Ltd, 1991) p. 107

ruling class saw that as betrayal. The words of a composer underscore the hatred that was meted on the persons involved: *"Of God cause Islam to suppress the unbelievers (obviously a reference to now non-Muslims). That our children and grand children may preserve their self-respect... God's hypocrites, their lying has ended. Northerners, forestall southerners at heart. Allah (God) for the sake of the Koran make the NPC supreme"*<sup>93</sup>. According to him, the Nigerian politics, whether one begins it in terms of the Southerners were targets just for the reason of not promoting the northern agenda just as the Christians in North, especially in Middle-Belt, were seen as southerners at heart, dressed in northern sheep's clothing. This ancient but potent conspiracy reared its ugly head up again during the 2011 presidential elections when the core northern states voted overwhelming for Mohammed Buhari of the CPC while the people of the Middle-Belt cast their votes for President Goodluck Jonathan. Buhari, to many in the north, was to unseat Jonathan so as to restore the North's lost glory!

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93. Cf. Bauna Peter Tanko, *The Christian Association of Nigeria and the challenge of the Ecumenical Imperative* (Jos: Fab Anieh Nig. Ltd, 1991) p. 107.

## RELIGION

The ill health of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua and his regrettable passing on, threw the country into political upheaval and with his silence many Nigerians were left to cope with a cabal that continuously held them to ransom<sup>94</sup>. His 93 days of absence from the country on health grounds indeed put the nation at crossroads. Thus, his return to the country on 24 February, 2010 from the King Faisal Specialist Hospital Jeddah was to end months of speculations spurred by desperate manipulations and outright deceit in a bid by his associate to cling to power at all cost<sup>95</sup>. However, this was not to be as the man was still missing from the public eye.

A cabal, allegedly headed by his wife Tural was accountable for ensuring that no one other than their allies saw the president. While every soul became increasingly impatient for the endless waiting to have the president on his feet, ploy such as "the president was seeing playing with children", "he will resume work next week", "he would attend Jumat prayers" were set up to blind fold the unsuspecting public all the more from his real state of health. In fact many people, including non-Muslims thronged the mosque on the Friday it was alleged he will be attending Jumat prayers,

94 cfr. Bauna Peter Tanko, *The Christian Association of Nigeria and the Challenge of the Ecumenical Imperative* (Jos: Fab Anieh Nig. Ltd, 1991) p. 114

95 Olalade Adewuyi 'what Yar'Adua Taught Nigerians Tell', April 17, 2010, p. 23



but went home as let down as ever as the man was not in sight. This drama made Wole Soyinka to state "what passes for the Nigerian nation is nothing more than a tragic arena and Yar'Adua is only the latest tragic figure. The vampires, including those within his family, turned him into a mere inert resource for their diabolic schism"<sup>96</sup>. The cloak and dagger manner in which the ill health of the President was handled was indeed incommodious and weakened the connection that holds Nigeria together as a nation.

The gimmicks earlier mentioned did not serve the function of misleading the public satisfactorily. The last alternative therefore, was to use religious leaders. And by 2<sup>nd</sup> of April, 2010, four prominent Islamic leaders visited the president to pray for him. They were: Ustaz Musa Mohammed, Chief Imam of National Mosque Abuja, Datti Ahmed, President, Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria, Sheikh Yakubu Musa and Sheikh Isa Pantami. Datti Ahmed told the world that "the condition in which they met the president was far better than what had been reported and warned that anybody who thinks of taking his position is playing with fire"<sup>97</sup>. Keen observers were of the opinion that the visit of the Islamic clerics was meant to turn the question of Yar'Adua's Political future into a religious course. The

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96 Adekunle Yusuf, 'At last, Catharsis' *Tell*, April 17, 2010, p. 20.

97 *Newswatch* May 17, 2010, p. 14

target was to present him to the Muslim clerics as a victim of unfair politics. This indeed worked as Christians complained that Yar'adua was being cast in the mold of a President only for Muslims; which necessitated the visit of Christian clerics led by the president of Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN, Archbishop John Onayekan, accompanied by the Bishop of Living Faith David Oyedepo, former Aso Rock Chaplain, Pastor Yusuf Obaje and Reverend Emmanuel Kure of the Throne Room Church<sup>98</sup>.

The official position of CAN after the meeting was: "we met Yar'Adua and prayed for him for 10 minutes"<sup>99</sup>. CAN was mute on the state of Yar'Adua's health while the Muslim clerics said he was recuperating<sup>100</sup>. For CAN to keep mum and to avoid talking on the state of Yar'Adua health was to avoid giving credibility to any of the two groups on the issue. If CAN had said the man is dying, the group calling for his exit would have simply gone for a cock tail party, congratulating themselves and calling for the invocation of section 144 of the constitution. On the other hand, if CAN had said the Katsina born president is just few steps from being hale and hearty, the "*Yar'Adua must stay group*" would stop at nothing to skin their opponent alive. This would have without doubt heated the polity all the more. Therefore,

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98 Dayo Aiyeta, 'End of the circus', *Tell*, April 17, 2010, p. 20

99 Babajide Kolade-Otitoju, *the News*, May 17, 2010. p. 22

100 Dayo Aiyeta, 'End of the circus', *Tell*, April 19 p. 20

the best signature, to guarantee the stability and unity of the country, was the silence of CAN on the state of the President's health demonstrating that silence is golden.

Kuc of the Tiron Room Church.

without doubt elected a deity all the more. Therefore, at nothing to show their opponent alive. This would have and hearty, the "Yah'adeu must stay groov" would stop Katina born president is just few steps from being hare constitution. On the other hand, if CAN had said the calling for the invocation of section 144 of the gone for a cock toll party congratulating themselves and dying, the group calling for his exit would have simply the two groups on the issue. If CAN had said the man is Yah'adeu health was to avoid giving credibility to any of to keep mum and to avoid talking on the state of the Muslim cleric said he was recanting". For CAN CAN was mule on the state of Yah'adeu's health while "we met Yah'adeu and prayed for him for 10 minutes". The official position of CAN after the meeting was:

## CHAPTER

# 5

## CAN: THE GREAT COMMISSION AND CHALLENGES



### THE GREAT COMMISSION: A PERMANENT CONCERN: WITH CHANGING NAMES

*"Go then, to all people everywhere and  
make them disciples" Mt. 28:19*

The meaning of this biblical text is what is generally referred to as the great commission: The mandate given to the disciples by Jesus himself to evangelize. This mandate must necessarily be the concern of anyone who is a disciple and apostle of the Lord Jesus. CAN in all her activities is acting as a symbol of apostleship and therefore cannot afford the risk of neglecting this all-important task that is both a call and vocation. It is a call because Jesus who is the message and the messenger has explicitly mandated as the will of the Father us. It is a vocation in the sense that we are living to spread the gospel. It is therefore not surprising that it has always been emphasized that the church exists essentially to



evangelize.

The reason of entertaining the discussion on the great commission in relation to CAN is because its mission to bring people to God and God to people is in tandem with what the great commission requires. But interestingly, evangelization of peoples is one Christian phenomenon that has been a permanent concern with different names. Looking at the names and understanding them is therefore necessary at this juncture.

### **MISSION AS A GEOGRAPHICAL TERM**

The basic idea of this form of evangelization is the expansion of Christian churches and establishing them in places that hitherto the church was absent. Historically, this idea dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the concept of mission was closely associated with the practice of European colonizers who assumed the duty of transplanting their form of Christianity to the previously non-Christianized nations colonized by them. The Pope, the head of the Christian World authorized this: a case in view is the *patronate* conceded to the kings of Spain and Portugal.<sup>101</sup> Those who established the churches were called missionaries and the places they opened new churches called

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101 E. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, (London: scm Press Ltd, 1973) p. 5

missions. The *pas faux* in mission as territory concept was that conversion was considered as change of religion (from traditional or other faiths to Christianity) rather than an encounter with the living Christ and discipleship<sup>102</sup>.

### **MISSION AS A SITUATIONAL TERM**

This view became popular at the Second Vatican Council. The Church Fathers at this gracious and auspicious council centered mission on the evangelization of people rather than geographical expansion of the church. This generated a transition from territorial to situation idea of mission as a deliberate means of complementing the limitation of mission as a geographical term.

### **MISSION AND EVANGELIZATION**

The noun 'gospel' and the verb 'evangelize' are used many times in the New Testament. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, some Protestants recognized the importance of mission activity and coined the noun evangelization. In the 1950s, the Catholics too came to make use of the term, considered first as the proclamation of the good news, catechesis and the progressive formation in the faith of those who are already evangelized.<sup>103</sup>

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102 E. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1973) p. 5

103 [www.canonline.org](http://www.canonline.org). Assessed on August 17, 2011

## MISSION AND NEW EVANGELIZATION

This has pre-occupied theological discussion in recent times. What stands out about the concept is its newness in order, in methods and expression, with the common good of man as the goal. New evangelization is also aimed at re-evangelization of people who were baptized but who have grown indifferent to religion.<sup>104</sup>

In all the instances mentioned thus far on mission, CAN cannot deny having direct dealings with the concepts of mission and evangelization. This is because CAN has as its obligation the challenge of ensuring the spread of churches to places that hitherto were absent. CAN also frowns at whatever that will impede the establishment of churches. Next to this and very importantly too is that CAN wants the conducive socio-political atmosphere where Christians can have personal experience of Jesus in prayers so as to worship Him in spirit and truth. And lastly, CAN promotes on-going spiritual rejuvenation of those who are already Christians. This is made possible through catechesis and other church programmes that make up the content of the terms mission and evangelization.

Due to the importance of evangelization an expose on its different approaches will serve a rewarding purpose.

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104 cfr. Josiah Idowu-Fearon, "conflict and Christianity" lecture series: Nigeria – challenges to contemporary society, <http://nifion.anglicancommunion.org/resourcearticles/conflict-and-christianity-lecture-series.cfm>, accessed on 14/09/2011.

1. Some say that evangelization only means inviting people into membership in the Church; we can call this the *affiliative* approach to evangelization. For these people, effective evangelization occurs when new members join the church or when inactive members return. The criterion for success is based on the fact that new or lapsed members are now officially on the roster and have been incorporated into the Body of Christ, the Church.
2. Other evangelizers say that the only determiner of effective evangelization is that the person evangelized has accepted the invitation to receive Jesus into his or her heart in a personal relationship. We can call this second approach the *foundational* approach. The emphasis here is strictly on the individual's personal, private response to Jesus' invitation.
3. The third type could be called the *specialization* approach: in it, everything the church does is considered as evangelization. Each separate ministry – whether it be liturgy, catechesis, social justice, youth, or any other ministry – views itself as an evangelizing ministry. Evangelization is becoming compartmentalized and creates competition and confusion at times rather than collaboration and unity among the various

ministries.

4. A fourth type, which because it is passive, is not really a type of evangelization, is the historical or traditional approach. Proponents of this non-approach method say that we have always evangelized, so let's just keep doing what we have been doing. This non-approach evangelization represents a passive attitude of people uninterested in change or pastors and staff who are tired, overworked, and who view evangelization as just another program or another project in an already over-crowded schedule. Evangelization is not a priority for them and it is not on their agenda.
5. A fifth type, the social action approach, is proposed by those who consider apostolic acts of charity and justice as works of evangelization. These include people who advocate the right-to-live; those who are anti-nuclear activists; soup-kitchen workers or even those housewives who care about their neighbours. In other words, all social workers are evangelizers, as noted by experts.

While all of these approaches have some merit, they have obvious weaknesses. What we need today is

an *integrative* model of evangelization which combines the positive aspects of all five of these approaches. An integrative model would include affiliation, personal relationship with Christ, and continuation of tradition. This model would operate where all of the ministries would coordinate their pastoral planning. Finally, this integrative model would result in social action and commitment. These approaches are being debated in the church today by the theologians and professional ministers of evangelization and hopefully they will arrive at a consensus.

### COMPONENTS OF EVANGELIZATION

Evangelization has several components: first and foremost, love, love of God, love of others, love of self; then, *invitation* into a personal relationship with Jesus, ongoing *conversion*, conscious, active *extension* of ourselves and our communities and the nurture of spiritual growth within the context of a worshipping faith community, and the ministry of loving service to others.

Pope Paul VI, in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, offers a summary of all the ingredients of an effective Evangelization: Proclamation, Conversion, Incorporation and Service.

1. Proclamation: The Gospel must be proclaimed by witness of lifestyle...which includes presence,

sharing, solidarity...the wordless witness of a Christian life. Nevertheless, this always remain insufficient...the witness of life sooner or later must be proclaimed by the word of life. There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed.

2. Conversion: Above all, each individual gains this kingdom and this salvation through a total interior renewal which the Gospel calls *metanoia*; it is a radical conversion, a profound change of mind and heart.
3. *Incorporation*: In fact the proclamation only reaches full development when it is listened to, accepted and assimilated, and when it arouses a genuine adherence in the one who has thus received it... such an adherence, which cannot remain abstract and unincarnated, reveals itself concretely by a visible entry into a community of believers... thus those whose life has been transformed enter a community which is itself a sign of transformation, a sign of newness of life: it is the church, the visible sacrament of salvation.
4. Service: How in fact can one proclaim the new

commandment without promoting, in justice and in peace, the true, authentic advancement of man? We ourselves have taken care to point this out, by recalling that it is impossible to accept 'that in evangelization one could or should ignore the importance of the problems...concerning justice, liberation, development and peace in the world. This would be to forget the lesson which comes to us from the Gospel concerning love of our neighbour who is suffering and in need. Neighbour understood as one who is in need. Be he a Muslim, Jew, Hindi or Christian.

### **CAN AND CHALLENGES**

- Jordan Samson Rengshwat is of the opinion that member Churches of CAN should include the association (CAN) in the curriculum of their seminaries. The focus of such subject or course would be the identification of what different denominations have in common and the exploration of scriptural text that encourage Christian unity. If CAN succeeds in this, it would be a celebrated victory. But even at that, the challenge still lingers as many 'self-made pastors' are not products of seminaries but of the comfort of their rooms, motivated by crass materialism and unguided quest for recognition and influence. How could CAN ensure that all men of the pulpit have basic Christian theology before embarking on running their churches so



that the message of their pulpit will not be a shame to the love of God and the ideals of the gospel?

- Proliferation of Churches is indeed a blessing but if not properly managed, it could become a sore spot on the skin of the Christendom. This conclusion is not difficult to arrive at as there are stories of very strange events happening in churches that CAN as an organization will not be proud of. The crux of my argument is in the wisdom that underscores the principle that “business without ethics is anarchy”. Corollary, “proliferation of churches without anyone's concern will be catastrophic”. I am sure victims of the Lagos based Pastor, Reverend King who is serving jail term for murder will agree that some regulation of what some churches do is necessarily.

One time CAN Chairman of Akwa Ibom State, Reverend Kenneth Ennang complained that anyone who takes a drive around the country will see churches with various names adorning almost every street. He maintained that we want an end to further springing up of churches. It is in the same spirit that patriarch Sunday Mbang among other respectable Christian clerics have advocated a regulatory body to check proliferation of churches as a move to sensitize the fold.

My main concern is regulating what happens in these churches even more than their multiplication. You will recall that the media has never been too willing to

be regulated, but the phone hacking scandals in London have drawn attention to the need for regulation. Regulation is *sine-qua-non* in most activities of public good because the human mind could easily be out of control, hence the need for caution as an effort to tame it and keep it within acceptable confines.

- Divine deception: Many pastors are taking undue advantage of the uncritical assertion of giving unto the Lord as panacea for financial breakthrough to deceive people. Logically, there is no correlation between giving as bait for divine favour as there are thousands who do not give, and giving is not the source of their affluence. For instance, in Europe and America where people are losing faith in religion, they give much less to their churches (if at all they care to) yet they live longer lives, are richer, healthier, more comfortable and have more disposable incomes than an average Nigerian that is daily brainwashed to give all he has. Some pastors simply view their congregation not as people in need of God's word and love but as goldmines. While I am a strong advocate of making pastors comfortable, I also disparage immoderation and unrestrained behavior, and call on CAN to check this phenomenon.

- During the Sharia saga in some states of the north, there was a ban on teaching of Christian Religious Knowledge in public schools. In most places, this ban is

still in place. Therefore, CAN needs to liaise with relevant agencies to eliminate this obnoxious policy that is targeted at the Christian faith. In a related development, CAN would need to necessarily mediate using existing appropriate agencies to find out why issuance of lands in some states of the north for building of churches is still *wahala*. Archbishop John Onaiyekan, at public lecture in the University of Ilorin told of a land allocation paper issued by a local government authority in Kano that specified textually "*Ba chochi, ba gidangiya, ba loggin*"<sup>105</sup> (no church, no alcohol drinking house, no lodge). Aside the clear denial of land for building of churches is the vexing equation or classification of church, drinking joint and lodge as if they serve the same purpose. These are real issues that CAN should tackle even at the level of Nigerian Inter-religious Council (NIREC).

- It is on record that CAN was the first to take the initiative that in due course led to the formation of Nigerian Inter-religious Council (NIREC). In the same vein CAN should spearheaded the effort to reinvigorate the moribund Nigerian Association for The Study of Religions to

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<sup>105</sup> cfr. Josiah Idowu-Fearon, "conflict and Christianity" lecture series: Nigeria – challenges to contemporary society, <http://nifion.anglicancommunion.org/resourcearticles/conflict-and-christian-ty-lecture-series.cfm>, accessed on 14/09/2011.

serve as the think-tank of peace initiatives and to also coordinate inter- religious dialogue in the country. Nothing is wrong if this becomes a unit in the presidency.

- Education, it is said, is power. This is because “the heart of education is the education of the heart”. This informs of the importance of education. Therefore just as in the case of CHAN, CAN should also explore the possibility of establishing a school. The benefits of such a school will among other things encourage tolerance and understanding thereby fast tracking the achievements of CAN in the areas of Christian unity and Inter-religious dialogue. I actually do not foresee unbearable difficulties in realizing this. After all, most member churches of CAN have established schools at different levels.
- Great sages have warned that an unexamined life is not worth living. As a result, CAN needs to re-appraise her activities in the light of the *sitz-in-laben*.

I will suggest that CAN should have different departments on major issues, including a department

on church and society. This department will advise CAN on her relationship with the government and people of other faiths. The department will generate for CAN *what* to say and *how* to say what in the best interest of the people it speaks for. CAN also needs to demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that the alleged accusation of the association as praying arm of the government of the day is not true by her stands on issues that are not in interest of the ordinary Nigerian, if not the general feeling in many quarters is that CAN is politicized. Collaborating this view, Philip Maigamu Gaiya said: "the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) which has been politicized should undergo some drastic changes by embarking on more concrete programmes aimed at enhancing of the lives of ordinary Nigerians".

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**



### **EXPLORING RELIGION AND CULTURE FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Religion and Culture have always exerted tremendous control over humankind. This is why the actions and inactions of people are said to be the product of both religion and culture. The basic argument therefore is that religion and culture are strapping enough to arrest and discipline the wild wiles impulses of the human mind, leaving it malleable to be shaped in a particular fashion in line with the desired worldview. This means that the urgency with which to use religion and culture to execute national unity cannot be over-emphasized, considering the need for unity in our national life in the face of growing challenges.

There is every gain saying that the choice of the concepts of religion and culture as tools for national unity is indeed on purpose, since both are involved in each other and it is even difficult to draw a precise line of

demarcation between them.<sup>106</sup> A brief analysis of the two terms will be a worthwhile and an exciting activity that will help set the parameters for the discourse at hand.

## RELIGION

Religion is very much with humankind. In fact it is part of our Worldview and environment. Therefore, religion *qua* religion needs no apologetic or some brilliantly constructed polemics to establish its existence. Religion exists with a compelling and conquering power that leaves humans totally at its mercy. It is in recognition of this that Bolaji Idowu was quoted that even a defective or obsolete scheme of religion will serve the individual better than none at all.<sup>107</sup> Geertz Clifford opines that the nature of religion as a system of symbols acts to establish powerful pervasive and long- lasting mood and motivation in men.<sup>108</sup> Each religious person therefore carry these inherited religious traits that have been transferred from generation to generation. Consequently, these religious

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106 cfr. Josiah Idowu-Fearon, "Conflict and Christianity" lecture series: Nigeria – challenges to contemporary society, <http://inifion.anglicancommunion.org/resource/articles/conflict-and-christianity-lecture-series.cfm>, accessed on 14/09/2011.

107 cfr. Josiah Idowu-Fearon, "Conflict and Christianity" lecture series: Nigeria – challenges to contemporary society, <http://inifion.anglicancommunion.org/resource/articles/conflict-and-christianity-lecture-series.cfm>, accessed on 14/09/2011.

108 Geertz Clifford, *The Interpretation of Culture* (New York, Basic Books, 1973) p.91

individuals from time to time, consciously or unconsciously, try to live out the internalized dispositions, derived from religious heritage.

For that reason, it follows that if the practice of our religious belief system is that of peace and harmony, either as Christian- Christians or Muslim- Muslim or between people of different faiths, then the task of national unity would have been much easier. If there had been amity among different faiths without manipulation of religion, Samuel Huntington would have had no *raison d'être* to author his 1993 book: "***The Clash of Civilizations***". In the book, he expressed concern over the clash between Christian and Islamic civilizations. Certain principles in the society compelled him to take this view and to premise his conclusion. How can you reconcile the quirk of fate that *Islam rules, Islam is never ruled*<sup>109</sup> in a democratic set up of a multi-religious society? This kind of mindset is predisposed towards religious manipulation and cantankerous stance that will take for a joke, and not 'yoke' even killing of humans as experienced again and again in Nigeria. Tetchy denominational disposition as exemplified in Ireland between Catholics and Protestants too is a disgraceful perfidy of the Christian love. These

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109 cfr. Josiah Idowu-Fearon, "conflict and Christianity" lecture series: Nigeria – challenges to contemporary society, <http://nifion.anglicancommunion.org/resourcearticles/conflict-and-christianity-lecture-series.cfm>, accessed on 14/09/2011.



unhelpful attitudes must necessarily be consigned to the waste bin of history and never allowed to engage in recreating future developments.

## **CULTURE**

Culture is the identity of the individual. Culture is one reality with many phases as indicated by this table

Definition of culture as	
TROPICAL:	Culture consists of everything on the composition of topics or categories, such as social organization, religion or economy
HISTORICAL:	Culture is social heritage, or tradition that is passed on to future generations
BEHAVIORAL:	Culture is shared, learned human behavior, or way of life
NORMATIVE:	Culture is ideals, values or rules for living
FUNCTIONAL:	Culture is the way humans solve problems of adapting to the environment or living together.
MENTAL:	Culture is a complex of ideals, or learned habits that inhibit impulses and distinguish people from animals

### General Conclusion

STRUCTURE:	Culture consists of patterned and interrelated ideas, symbols or behavior .
SYMBOLIC:	Culture is based on arbitrarily assigned meanings that are shared by a society.

From this table, the following are highlighted about culture:...it consists of religion as earlier mentioned,...it is a learned human behavior, ...learned habits means of solving human problems,...arbitrary assigned meanings that are shared by a society,...passed from generation to generation . Therefore, let national unity be learned, let it be a habit, let it be shared using the mass media, traditional rulers, religious and opinion leaders as well as the organized civil society. For too long, the nation has suffered in the hands of a small number of people who have conspired to divide the unsuspecting public along the lines of region and religion. Therefore, we must congregate to make certain undivided unity for all. This can only be achieved if we are resolute in our purpose, unshakable in our determination and courageous even in the face of fear.

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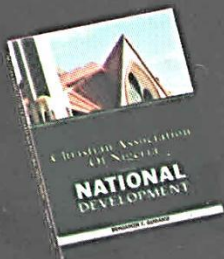
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## About The Book



In Nigeria, religion should not be allowed to constitute an impediment; rather it should be paraphernalia that promotes the well-being of the citizens. This is the stake of all Nigerians and by implication therefore all existing groups, communities and associations must garner their resources toward this direction.

Springing from this background, Benjamin Tyavkase Gudaku sets out to demonstrate that Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has got all, both the software and hardware that will significantly contribute to the development of Nigeria and thereby positively affect the world order. Many a people subscribe to the oppositional description of confrontation and fail or refuse to see its other aspect that implies meeting face to face with reality or calling a spade a spade. This other aspect of confrontation does not spoil the soup either; rather it serves the soup-topic in a big bowl before the glaring vision and feel of all at the discussion table, not minding if the ensuing response will be a disgust or gusto. What Gudaku has done in this book is to confront us with the parameters of Christendom in Nigeria under its umbrella existence of CAN and associated issues of functionality, intra-Christian relationship, inter-religious engagement and CAN's ancillary cooperation with the national government. He goes on to argue vehemently that all forms of relationship must steer towards national development. With the given of this book therefore, Gudaku is saying one stark option stares both Christian and non-Christian in the face, namely, peremptory pluralism of engagement with the other toward the common good of Nigerians. This is the ultimate value that can justify our religious and socio-cultural identities anywhere in the world. Anything short of this is abhorrent!



## About The Author

Benjamin Tyavkase Gudaku attended the St. Peter's Seminary, Yola, Adamawa State. He holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Philosophy. Aside being well schooled in Christian Theology, he also has Master of Arts Degree in Religious Studies, with bias in Christian Ethics. Ben is the author of

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